

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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VERONICA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."

IN FIVE BOOKS.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER XIII. REPARATION?

"To my beloved wife.' That will be sufficient. Take these things away, and put another pillow behind my shoulders, Paul. Paul! Paul! do you hear?"

Then followed a hoarse muttered volley of oaths, and Sir John sank back on his pillow.

Veronica and Barletti stood beside his bed. The former very pale and excited; the latter wondering, and impressed by the change in Sir John's face. There was an awful look upon it. The skin seemed to be burnt and shrivelled by an inward scorching fire. The eyes looked out glassy and prominent from under their red eyebrows. There was a harsh stubble of beard upon the cheeks and chin.

"You have explained to him, have you?" asked Sir John, in a faint voice, making a slight movement with the emaciated hand that lay outside the coverlet, towards Barletti.

"He understands the purport of what you tell us you have written," answered Veronica.

"Aye, that is right. I want him to understand. The estate in Dorsetshire is entailed, and will go to a cursed snob, a third cousin who inherits the baronetcy, curse him! But the money in the English funds, the plate, the house in town, the railway shares, and—and everything else, in short, will be 'my beloved wife's.'"

He said the words with so strangely malevolent a grimace on his withered face, that Veronica stared at him with wide eyes,

for once unconscious of their own expression. Barletti, too, was struck by the look, though he could not fully comprehend the words of Sir John. The latter had lately—during the last day or so, that is—ceased to speak any language but his own. It troubled him to talk French, he said. At any time of his life, and under any circumstances, it would have appeared to him a sufficient reason for refraining from doing anything, to say that it troubled him. But as things were with him, it was very obvious that he was unequal to making much continued effort.

"Does Gale say it has been signed?" asked Barletti of Veronica.

Sir John's ear had caught the question, and he answered it.

"Oh, yes! Yes, the witnesses! Aye, we must have witnesses, or it would not be a legal instrument. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, yes. Oh, it is signed; it is witnessed. I have taken care!"

In obedience to a sign from his master, whose every movement he watched attentively, Paul took a small key from a ring attached to his master's watch-chain, and with it unlocked a desk that stood at one end of the room opposite to the bed. He then opened an inner compartment of the desk, which was fastened by a spring, and took out a folded paper covered with writing on one side. When all was done, Sir John stretched his hand out for the paper to be given to him. His eyes travelled over the writing—it was very short—and then glanced at Barletti and Veronica as they stood side by side near the bed. With a sudden movement his fingers cramped themselves on the paper they held, creasing it into irregular folds.

"Go away, go away!" he gasped out. "Go and leave me. And—Paul, Paul!"

Take you this precious paper, and lock it up again carefully in the drawer of that desk. Let them see you do it. So; so. And you are a witness to it, remember. You will know and recollect that that is my will, which leaves the bulk of my property to my wife—to my beloved wife. Now go."

The latter command was addressed to Barletti and Veronica, who, nothing loth to leave that presence, withdrew. It was the fifth evening after the day the incidents of which have been narrated in the preceding chapter. On returning home from the ship Sir John had taken to his bed, and had not since left it. He was in a strangely excited state, and fuller than usual of capricious ill humour.

After Sir John had dismissed them from his bedside, Veronica and Barletti remained tête-à-tête in the large dimly-lighted saloon. No one observed them. They were free to remain together as long as they chose. Sir John, far from displaying suspicion, seemed to desire Barletti's presence in the house. But yet the prince made no attempt to profit by this opportunity of making love to the beautiful Veronica. She sat down silently, and with a disturbed countenance. He walked to the window whose shutters were unclosed, and looked out into the moonlight. The oppression of Sir John's looks and words weighed upon them both like a hot, stifling air.

Veronica broke the silence. She spoke in a subdued voice, although there was, as she well knew, no human creature within ear-shot.

"Cesare! Why don't you speak to me? I feel so horribly unstrung."

"Cara! You have been too much tried. You must try to be strong and composed. Coraggio."

"I hate such meaningless talk," she replied, fretfully. "Coraggio! It is not courage I want. Courage won't explain and make clear. Do you think, Cesare, that he is really—dying?"

"He is undoubtedly very, very ill."

"There again! Meaningless empty words. I know—we all know—that he is very, very ill. But I ask if you think the end is near?"

Cesare really loved her, and he was patient with her as real love is. He seated himself near her, and softly placed his hand upon her head.

"Veronica mia," he said, "I am not skilled in such signs. But it does seem to me that there is to-night a warning change in him."

Veronica shuddered and drew close to him, pressing her shoulder against his with the gesture, not of a lover, but of a little frightened child that seeks the comfort of human contact in the dark.

"He must feel deeply the wrong he did you," proceeded Cesare. "It must be owned that he is doing what he can to save his soul. The testament he has made is a generous one."

"Yes—I don't know——"

"You don't know?"

"I—I—feel—I cannot explain it; but I have a strange feeling as though he were fooling me to the last."

"Fancies, my child. What puts them into your head?"

"I cannot explain it, I tell you. He looks at me sometimes almost fiendishly. And with a kind of exultation in his eyes too. Just now I almost believed his mind was wandering."

"No, no; he was in perfect possession of his senses," said Barletti, hastily, feeling that this suggestion was an extremely imprudent one for Sir John's legatee to make. "He has done everything with forethought and deliberation. The marriage on board ship was his own idea, was it not?"

"Yes."

"And on the first distant hint of his making a provision for you—which you uttered in accordance with my suggestion—he met your wishes by telling you that he had already made a will with which his widow would have no reason to be dissatisfied?"

"Yes."

"The will is clearly expressed and duly witnessed, is it not?"

"He did not show it to me. He merely read a few words from it."

"But he stated what its purport was, in the presence of Paul, who had witnessed it. And its terms surpassed your expectations. Is all that not true?"

"Y—yes, I suppose so. Yes; it is true," added Veronica, in a firmer tone. Barletti's recapitulation of the facts was reassuring her. She had, in truth, spoken at first with an indistinct hope of eliciting some such reassuring statement of the case.

"But," she added, after a pause, during which her memory had vividly recalled certain of Sir John's looks and words: "although all that is true, quite true, I cannot help being made uneasy by his manner. Why should he do this for me if he hates me, as I most thoroughly believe he does?"

"Hates you, Veronica! What wild folly!"

"No, no, no; it is not wild folly. It is sober sense," pursued Veronica, speaking with vehemence, now that she had once began to reveal the secret thought that was in her. "I have long guessed it. I may say that I have long *known* it. What love he ever felt for me has been over this many a day. I always know when people love me—*always*. And he hates you too. He is jealous of you. I have seen his eyes, when he did not know that I saw them, under the shadow of his lamp-screen on the little table. And I believe he set Paul to watch us. I do!"

The strong conviction in her tone was not without its effect on Barletti. But he answered with the confident calmness of one who is rebutting an obvious absurdity, and with a slight nodding of his head up and down: "Well, it is the most original demonstration of hatred I ever heard of, to bestow his name and his fortune on you at the very moment when he is about to leave you free to enjoy both as you please. Most people would call such conduct affectionate and generous."

"Yes. And it is because I know him to be incapable of either affection or generosity that I cannot be easy."

"Veronica, that is morbid!"

"Well, you may say what you please, but I *know* that man means me no good. Do you remember what he said last night as we sat beside his bed? *Dio mio!* How it all comes back plainly to me. He said, 'Ah! you are both young, and handsome, and healthy. How delightful it is to think of the years of happiness that stretch before you!' And did you not see the diabolical sneer he gave? 'Oh! Cesare, there is some evil to come. I am sure of it.'"

She wrung her hands tightly together, and began to pace quickly up and down the room.

"Veronica," he said, after a minute's consideration, "it may be that you do not much wrong Sir John's nature. And yet I am convinced you are mistaken in your conclusions. If he does not care for you he cares for himself, and the fear of death is a powerful motive to reparation."

"He does not believe in reparation. He scoffs at everything. He has no religion."

"But those are the very people to be afraid. I have known men who have never been to mass, or to confession, for twenty years, turn like soft wax in the hands of

the priests when there came any question of dying."

"Ah, in your church, perhaps. But with us it is different."

"And then, don't you see, Veronica, that the struggle in his mind between evil promptings, and the desire to save his own soul, may produce all the strange fluctuations you observe in his manner?"

She shook her head doubtfully, but she liked that her vague fears and suspicions should be combated. She leaned on this man who loved her. She had been right in her assertion that she always knew when she was loved. With whatever motive he had first sought to make himself pleasing in her eyes, she was unshakably sure that *now*, at all events, he loved her for herself; and that were she destitute to-morrow he would not desert her. And then, too, her apprehensions seemed less alarming now she had uttered them, than they had appeared while she brooded over them silently. Perhaps Cesare was right, and she was wrong after all! What flaw *could* there be in her fortunes? Yes: no doubt Cesare was right! She was very glad she had spoken to him so openly. Before they parted, she took his head between her hands, and pressed her lips to his forehead. The action was little more than an expression of the relief to her mind which his word had brought: and partly it was the selfish instinctive clinging in peril to a clasping hand—the clinging of a child, that knows no compunction in throwing all its weight of care and fear on to the patient willing shoulders of those who love it.

The next day about noon, Cesare de' Barletti was breakfasting in one of the principal caffès in Naples, when Mr. Frost walked in and took his seat at a small round table near him.

"Ah, Mr. Frost! So you are not gone then?" said Barletti, shaking hands. This was a ceremony he never omitted with an Englishman, conceiving that to have done so would have been as great a solecism in good manners as to decline the proffered pipe of a Turk.

"No," returned Mr. Frost. "I am not gone, as you see. The telegram came after all. I may be detained here another week or so. I have not seen you these last days, prince."

"I have been nowhere—nowhere except to the house of a sick friend. He is dying I fancy. Do you remember—" Barletti suddenly checked his speech and dropped his coffee-cup with a clatter that brought

the waiters hurrying up. In the little momentary bustle, his sudden pause and confusion escaped notice, as he fancied.

Cesare had been on the point of mentioning that his sick friend was no other than the bridegroom whose marriage had taken place on board the *Furibond*, when he remembered that Frost had spoken of "Lady Gale." If Frost supposed Veronica to be Sir John's wife already at the time of their conversation at the window of the hotel, it would be injudicious, to say the least, to proclaim that she had only been married that very morning. Besides, Veronica had so shrunk from having the date of the marriage known. It might be—nay it was probable—that Mr. Frost had already heard of it. But at all events he (Cesare) would say no word on the subject. Mr. Frost had clearly perceived that the dropping of the coffee-cup had been a mere feint on Barletti's part to divert attention from his unfinished speech. But it was a matter of considerable indifference to Mr. Frost whether Prince Cesare de' Barletti were close or candid in his communications, now that the business which had brought the two men into contact was satisfactorily concluded. He therefore began to chat easily and amusingly as he sipped his coffee, and Barletti listened with lazy satisfaction.

Presently he observed, during a pause in the talk: "What a devil of a pace those fellows drive at! The hackney cabmen I mean. Just listen how one is tearing up the street at this moment. Neck or nothing!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Frost, "I often wonder that in your teeming streets more accidents do not happen. This fellow, whoever he may be, is coming here, by the sound. By Jove! What's the matter?"

The exclamation was elicited by the sudden pulling up of an open cab at the door, and the hurried descent therefrom of a pale frightened servant in an English livery. The man looked about him eagerly, and elbowed his way through the crowd of coffee-drinkers with a disregard of their convenience which would have brought down considerable wrath on his head, had it not been for the expression of his countenance, which aroused curiosity and kept resentment in abeyance.

"Oh, there you are, signor principe!" exclaimed the man, catching sight of Barletti; "I've been half over Naples looking for you! At last I heard you were here. Will you come at once to miladi? Here's the cab waiting."

"What is it, Pietro?" asked Barletti,

rising with a face yet paler than the servant's.

He had no reason to fear for Veronica, and yet his unreasonable lover-like apprehension could fix on no other object.

"My master, signor principe, is dying or dead. I don't expect to find him alive when we get there, and miladi she's been falling from one fainting fit into another. And as soon as she had consciousness she sent for you."

Barletti seized his hat and rushed to the door. Before he stepped into the cab, he called out to Frost, "Let me see you this evening! I may have business. Something important! Come to the Palazzo Dinori at six o'clock if you possibly can, and ask for me!"

Then Barletti got into the cab, and was whirled away with a mighty whooping and clattering of hoofs.

CHAPTER XIV. "MY BELOVED WIFE."

MR. FROST called at the Palazzo Dinori a few minutes after six o'clock that evening. He was admitted immediately by the porter, who had been told to expect him, and was ushered into a small, sumptuously furnished room, overladen with ornament. It was Veronica's boudoir.

Mr. Frost had not come to the palazzo without trying to gain some information respecting the person who lived there. A rich Englishman—very, very rich! A millionaire at the least. Milordo Gale. That was the report of the landlord of Mr. Frost's hotel. His cook was a superior person—a man of talent—a *cordon bleu*! The landlord had the honour of a slight acquaintance with that distinguished artist; who sometimes cracked a bottle of "Lacrime" or fine Capri with him, in his private room. As to Milordo Gale—ah, yes, he was rich. *Diavolo*! Poor men did not enjoy the services of such a cook. The landlord had known the latter long, and esteemed him highly. He had been chef de cuisine to the Russian Ambassador, years ago: in the old days, you understand.

Mr. Frost would perhaps not have complied with Barletti's request to go to the Palazzo Dinori so promptly, had he not felt a considerable amount of curiosity respecting its inmates. He sat down in the luxurious room and contrasted it with poor Lady Tallis's shabby lodging in Gower-street. That thought brought others in its train: other thoughts of a painful and harassing nature. His promise to Zillah Lockwood had not yet been redeemed. And Hugh

was growing more and more headstrong. It was more than a fortnight since he had had any private letter from England, and the last had been from his wife; a tissue of complaints and demands for money from beginning to end. Mr. Frost's private meditations were not soothing. They were a bitter cud to chew. So with a wrench of his mind, and a movement of his body as though he were shaking a tangible weight from his shoulders, he turned his thoughts to other matters. Things had got to that point with him now, when a man tells himself that it is no use thinking of his troubles: thinking will mend nothing. Some turn of luck must come—may come, at all events. And if not—? If not, why still it is no use thinking. The devil must have his own way!

Mr. Frost had not sat ten minutes in the boudoir, before Barletti came in.

"Caro amico," said he, grasping the lawyer's hand hard, "you are come! Thanks, many thanks. I have great need of you."

Barletti had never addressed Mr. Frost as "*caro amico*" before.

"What can I do for you?" asked the latter, observing Barletti's face attentively, but not ostentatiously.

"It is all over here. That man—Sir John Gale—"

"Your friend?"

"My friend! Yes, yes, my friend! The most unheard-of cold-blooded villain—! Maria Santissima, forgive me! He has gone to meet his deserts."

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr. Frost, with closed lips and an indescribable inflection in his voice. "*Has he?* That is to say that he is—?"

"Dead."

"Oh! Yes. I see. Was it sudden?"

"One can hardly say so after all these months of wasting away. But yet at the last it was sudden. It was a hideous sight to see. When I got here they took me straight into his room. I turned sick and faint as a girl," said Barletti, growing pale and shuddering at the recollection.

"How? What was the hideous sight?"

"He had broken a blood-vessel, and was lying there just as he had died. They had touched nothing. It was horrible!"

The impressionable Italian hid his face with his hands, as though to shut out the remembrance of the scene.

"Who was with him? How was the cause of death ascertained?"

"The two physicians who attended him

arrived just after it happened. He had been raving in a fit of maniacal fury. That killed him, there's no doubt."

A thought occurred to Mr. Frost. If Sir John Gale had died intestate, his widow would undoubtedly be a wealthy woman. In any case his death would benefit her, for there were settlements under which she would have at least such an income as befitted her rank. Lady Tallis Gale's niece would now be in very different circumstances from those she had been in hitherto. Maud would be Lady Tallis's heiress of course. And then—then that might make a difference in the prospects of Hugh Lockwood! The thought passed through Mr. Frost's brain so quickly that there was no perceptible pause before he said, "You will allow me to suggest that you should at once telegraph to England. Perhaps you have already done so?"

Barletti was resting his elbows on the table and alternately bringing his open palms together on his forehead, and slowly separating them with a stroking movement towards his ears. He made a little negative gesture with his head, in answer to Mr. Frost's question.

"You asked me to come here, prince, in such a manner that I concluded you stood in need of professional advice from me. If I was wrong, you will forgive me for reminding you that my time is precious, and that if there is no service I can render you, I must withdraw."

"No, no, don't go! Pray don't go! I do want you. I have the greatest need of you! I have been half distracted all day. More for her sake, God knows, than my own!"

"For—her sake?"

"I am her cousin. I have a right to be near her and protect her. Her mother was Maria Stella de' Barletti. There is no other relative in Italy to take care of her."

"Prince, I do not in the least doubt your right to take care of the lady in question. But—who is '*she*'?"

"Do you remember that morning, now nearly a week ago, when we saw Sir John Gale being rowed ashore from the English ship?"

"Certainly. Ah, I see. Yes, yes: I begin to understand. There was a lady with him—a young lady as it seemed to me. Humph!"

"Yes, that was she. She was in a dreadful state this morning when I came here. She had been fainting, falling from one swoon into another, and that was best for her, *povera anima sofferente*! For when she

became conscious again, her misery was terrible to witness."

"May I ask what was the occasion of the lady's agitation? Did they permit her to see the scene which so affected you? That was injudicious!"

"Oh, yes! She saw it all. She has not yet been able to give me a connected account of it, but from what she said, and from what Paul said—Paul was that man's valet—I have ascertained that the scene must have been appalling."

Mr. Frost was secretly very much surprised at Barletti's acknowledgment that the beautiful young woman whose position in Sir John Gale's household could not be doubtful, was his cousin. The young prince's visits to Palazzo Dinori, and his devotion to the lovely woman who inhabited it, were well-known and much-discussed topics of gossip in Naples; as they had been at Florence: a fact of which Barletti was as innocent as a child. For there are minds which although shrewd enough to judge their neighbours, can never conceive that the same standard is naturally applied to measure *them*. Some breath of this gossip had floated by Mr. Frost, and had remained in his memory. Veronica was usually spoken of as "*La Gale*;" a mode of designating her which conveyed no idea of wifehood to Mr. Frost's ears. Mr. Frost was not unacquainted with foreign life. He had lived in Paris, and called himself a man of the world. But he did not quite understand Italian manners; nor was he aware that their social morality is presided over by a stern goddess called *Decorum*: to outrage whose laws is a blasphemy condemned by all well-bred persons. It would not sting an Italian man of quality to talk to him about "*whited sepulchres*." There *must* be sepulchres, and the least you can do is to whitewash them!

"Well," said Mr. Frost, shrugging his shoulders, "the poor signora ought not to have been allowed to witness such a scene. But I suppose it will pass away. Did Sir John make any provision for her?"

"It is on that point," said Barletti, changing colour, "that we wish to consult you. She has been the victim of a base deception. But I believe that Providence has not forsaken her. This man, in his will leaves everything absolutely——"

"His will!" cried the lawyer, suddenly on the alert "He left a will? Are you sure?"

"Most sure. I saw it only last evening."

"Last evening! You read it?"

"No: I cannot say that I read it. I should not have understood it all, being in English, though I might have made out a word or two. But he told us the contents in presence of one of the witnesses: Paul, the valet I spoke of just now."

"And this will leaves everything absolutely you say, to——?"

"To his wife."

"To—his—wife!"

"To his beloved wife." Those are the words."

"By Jove!" breathed out Mr. Frost in a whisper of amazement. "Why then your cousin will not get a penny, not a soldo, not a centime! Unless—stop! was there a codicil? Any other legacies?"

"There was nothing more. And it was all meant for Veronica. She must have it! She was his wife when he died."

"My dear prince," said Mr. Frost, in a low, steady voice, laying his hand on the other man's arm, "you had best be frank with me. It is useless to call in a doctor unless you will tell him all your symptoms. Some folks try to cheat even the doctor! But that is not found to result in a cure very often. This lady, for whom as your relative, I profess every respect, was not, according to English law, the wife of Sir John Gale. And English law is terribly inflexible and unromantic. I don't think Phryne herself would have a chance in the Court of Chancery:—which is not without its good side when you don't happen to be Phryne!"

"Phryne! What do you mean, sir? What are you talking of? I say that my cousin Veronica is Lady Tallis Gale, and can be proved to be so in any court in Europe. She was married on board the English Queen's ship *Furibond*, on Tuesday morning."

"What!" shouted Mr. Frost, springing to his feet. "He did that? Then he was a bigamist. I tell you his lawful wife is living. I know her well!"

"No, you are wrong!" said a low voice which startled them both.

The door communicating with the adjoining room, which was "*miladi's*" dressing-room, was opened, and Veronica stood in the doorway. She was as white as the muslin wrapper that was folded round her. Her hair fell in disorder over her shoulders. Her eyes were swollen and heavy. But in the midst of her very real absorption in the trouble that had fallen on her, she was not altogether indifferent to the effect she should produce by her appearance. And it was as striking as she could have desired it to be.

"Angelo mio!" exclaimed Barletti, running to support her with tender sympathy, "why didst thou venture here? Thou art too feeble, my dearest!"

"Leave me alone, Cesare. I can stand and walk by myself. Look at this, Mr. Frost!" she added in English, holding out a letter to him as she spoke.

"You speak—you are English?" murmured Mr. Frost, more and more bewildered, but taking the letter and opening it.

His eyes had not mastered two lines of its contents, before he gave a violent start, and the letter fluttered from his hand on the table whilst he gazed searchingly at Veronica with all his keen wits about him.

"That killed him," said Veronica, bitterly. "He had thought to betray and to trap me. And the rage of disappointment was more than he could bear."

"But," said Mr. Frost, all his professional interest aroused in the case, "we must be careful to assure ourselves that he did *not* succeed in betraying and trapping you!"

She was about to interrupt him impetuously, when he held up a warning finger to check her.

"Stay a moment! This bears date—aye, the same day. Tuesday last, was it not? Then this much I see plainly—it *will all depend upon the hour*. And now tell me your whole story. Have no more reserves than if I were your father confessor. The only chance I have of helping you is to know the whole truth."

"Go away, Cesare," said Veronica, after a pause. "I would rather speak to Mr. Frost alone. I will send for you by-and-bye."

"Do not let her tire herself, poverina," said Barletti, moving reluctantly away. He turned when he had reached the door, and, coming back, took her hand and kissed it with a touching, humble tenderness. Then he was gone.

The letter which Veronica had handed to Mr. Frost, ran thus:

London, March 5th, 186—.

SIR JOHN,—It is my painful duty to inform you of the decease of your respected wife, Lady Tallis Gale, who expired, at her apartments in Gower-street, yesterday morning. Her ladyship's niece, Miss Desmond, was with her to the last. Awaiting any instructions with which you may be pleased to honour me, and with my respectful condolence on the sad event,

I remain, Sir John,

Your very humble servant,
ADAM LANE.

To Sir John Tallis Gale, Bart.

P.S. Her ladyship's disorder was consumption of the lungs. The arrangements for the funeral have been made in your absence, by Miss Desmond's directions. Her ladyship's relative Sir Thomas Delaney of Delaney has been invited to attend.

A. L.

A HINDU LEGEND.

ABOUT a century before our Christian era, there lived in India—precise locality a little hazy to us western barbarians—a certain king and demigod, called Gandharba-Sena. Now Gandharba-Sena was the son of Indra, the great God of the Firmament; and according to Captain Burton (whose delightful book* we are going to lay under contribution for an article) he was the original of that famous Golden Ass, whose metamorphosis and vicissitudes are told by Apuleius. For, having offended Father Indra by an indiscreet tenderness for a certain nymph, he was doomed to wander over the earth under the form of a donkey, by day; though, by the interposition of the gods he was allowed to become a man by night. While still for half his time a donkey, Gandharba-Sena persuaded the King of Dhara to give him his daughter in marriage; but it unfortunately happened that at the wedding hour the bridegroom could not show himself otherwise than as an ass; in which, perhaps, he was not singular, taking the circumstances into consideration. Hearing music and singing within, he resolved to give them a specimen of his powers of melody too: so he lifted up his voice, and brayed: to the consternation and contemptuous amusement of the company. The guests began forthwith to remonstrate with the king.

"O king," said one, "is this the son of Indra? You have found a fine bridegroom; you are, indeed, happy; don't delay the marriage; delay is improper in doing good; we never saw so glorious a wedding! It is true that we once heard of a camel being married to a jenny-ass; when the ass, looking up to the camel, said, 'Bless me, what a bridegroom!' and the camel, hearing the voice of the ass, exclaimed, 'Bless me, what a musical voice!' In that wedding, however, the bride and bridegroom were equal; but in this mar-

* Vikram and the Vampire; or Tales of Hindu Devilry. Adapted by Richard F. Burton, F.R.G.S., &c. London: Longmans and Co.

riage that such a bride should have such a bridegroom is truly wonderful."

"Other Brahmans then present said: 'O king, at the marriage hour, in sign of joy, the sacred shell is blown, but thou hast no need of that.'" (Alluding to the donkey's braying.)

"The women all cried out, 'O my mother! what is this? At the time of marriage to have an ass! What a miserable thing! What! Will he give that angelic girl in wedlock to a donkey?'"

"At length Gandharba-Sena, addressing the king in Sanskrit, urged him to perform his promise. He reminded his future father-in-law that there is no act more meritorious than speaking truth; that the mortal frame is a mere dress; and that wise men never estimate the value of a person by his clothes. He added that he was in that shape from the curse of his sire, and that during the night he had the body of a man. Of his being the son of Indra there could be no doubt. Hearing the donkey thus speak Sanskrit—for it was never known that an ass could discourse in that classical tongue—the minds of the people were changed, and they confessed that, although he had asinine form, he was unquestionably the son of Indra. The king, therefore, gave him his daughter in marriage."

The son of this man-donkey, or donkey-man, Gandharba-Sena, and the Princess of Dhara, therefore the grandson of Indra, was the great soldier-king Vikramaditya, or Sun of Heroism, "Vikram" meaning valour or prowess, the King Arthur, the Charlemagne, the Harun el Rashid of India. (We follow Captain Burton, who presumably knows what he is about, in the spelling of our old friend's name.) Before the Sun of Heroism's birth Gandharba-Sena promised him the strength of a thousand male elephants; but Indra swore an oath that he would never be born; whereupon his mother stabbed herself, and Vikram, as he is called for short—it is lucky for him he did not get curtailed to Vik—came into the world on his own account, and so saved his grandfather's oath. In conclusion, perhaps as some sort of compensation, Indra, to whom the little Sun of Heroism was taken, had compassion on him, adopted him, and gave him a good education: which last fact is an example which all irate but influential grandfathers ought to follow.

We come now to two quasi-historical and decidedly less mythical accounts of Vikram; one which makes him the second,

the other the eldest, son of his father. In the first account, of course, he murdered his elder brother, Shank, as all wise young princes, in India, do. For though he was protected by grandpapa Indra, and endowed by Father Gandharba-Sena with the strength of a thousand male elephants, still as the younger brother of the reigning monarch he would not have found things quite to his taste. The second account makes him the eldest son of Gandharba-Sena, of whom the most that posterity has to say is, that he became an ass, married four queens, and had six sons: each of whom was more powerful and learned than the other; and that when he, Gandharba, died, Vikram and his younger brother, Bhartarihari, received some excellent advice from their worthy grandfather about mastering everything; which, as Captain Burton says, is a sure way not to succeed in anything. Without going into the list of their required accomplishments, suffice it to say, they were to be models of morality, and inexhaustible wells of learning; the outcome of which was that Vikram, when he had become a monarch on his own account, meditated deeply on what is said of monarchs. "A king is fire and air; he is both sun and moon; he is the god of criminal justice; he is the genius of wealth; he is the regent of water; he is the lord of the firmament; he is a powerful divinity who appears in human shape." He reflected with some satisfaction that the scriptures had made him absolute, had left the lives and properties of all his subjects to his arbitrary will, had pronounced him to be an incarnate deity, and had threatened to punish with death even ideas derogatory to his honour.

His kingship, however, despite its power and glory, was no sinecure practically; and what between the necessity of swallowing a mithridatic every morning on the saliva, or, as we say, on an empty stomach; of making the cooks taste every dish they had prepared before he would touch a morsel of it; of being fully armed when he received strangers; and of having even women searched for concealed weapons, before they were admitted to him, his life must, have been anxious as well as busy. Pedantically marked out, and wearisomely monotonous, it certainly was. The result of it all was, it must be confessed, a well-ordered kingdom, where no one was oppressed, and where all had equal justice; where the innocent were protected, and offenders inexorably punished: whereby the

majesty of the law was upheld, and a wholesome fear of the rulers inculcated. "But what benefited him most, was his attention to the creature comforts of the Nine Gems of Science: those eminent men ate and drank themselves into fits of enthusiasm, and ended by immortalising their patron's name." Suddenly, the king bethought him he would travel, that he might, in fact, spy out in disguise the nakedness of the lands, and so judge for himself how he could best bring his powerful army against them. He had several sons by his several wives, and he had a fair share of paternal affection for all, save, of course, his eldest born: a youth who conducted himself as though he had no claim to the succession! But of all, Dharma Dwaj, his second son, was his favourite. Accompanied by this young prince, an adolescent of admirable modesty and simplicity, Vikram the Brave, giving the government of his kingdom and the city Ujjayani into the charge of his younger brother, Bhartari Raja, set out in the garb of a jogi, or religious mendicant: wandering from city to city, and forest to forest, to see what fate and chance would send in his way.

Now, the Regent Bhartari Raja "was of a settled melancholic turn of mind, having lost in early youth a very peculiar wife. One day, while out hunting, he happened to pass a funeral pyre, upon which a Brahman widow had just become sati (a holy woman) with the greatest fortitude. On his return home, he related the adventure to Sita Rani, his spouse, and she at once made reply that virtuous women die with their husbands, killed by the fire of grief, not by the flames of the pile. To prove her truth, the prince, after an affectionate farewell, rode forth to the chase, and presently sent back the suite with his robes torn and stained, to report his accidental death. Sita perished upon the spot, and the widower remained inconsolable—for a time." He led the dullest of lives, and took to himself sundry spouses, all equally distinguished for birth, beauty, and modesty; he regulated his desires in all things by the strictest rule and measurement; he worked as ploddingly and unrestingly as a horse in a mill; and when his monotonous day was over, he used to retire to his private apartments, and while listening to soft music and spiritual songs fall fast asleep as the best compliment he could pay the minstrels. Sometimes, on wakeful nights, he used to summon his brother's Nine Gems of Science, and give

ear to their learned discourses, which never failed as soporifics when nothing else could "get him off," as nurses say. So time and his youth passed away, and Bhartari Raja became a philosopher and a quietist.

But Kama, God of Love, no more able than his younger brothers Eros and Cupid to let sleeping dogs lie, sent into the raja's way, Dangalah Rani, his last and youngest wife. To say that her face was the full moon; her hair a purple rain-cloud; her complexion exactly like the pale waxen blossoms of the large-flowered jessamine; her eyes those of an antelope; her lips as red as a pomegranate bud, and that, when they opened they distilled a fountain of ambrosia; to say that her neck was like a pigeon's, her hand like the pink lining of the conch shell, her waist a leopard's, and her feet the softest lotuses; will perhaps give us dull westerns no very distinct image of her charms. To say that the staid raja became drivelling and doting in the excess of his love; that he would even have committed the unforgivable sin of slaughtering a cow, had she so commanded; and that the very excess of his love sickened the woman into indifference, if not hatred; is perhaps more intelligible. To indemnify herself for the presence of a husband who loved her and whom she did not love, Dangalah Rani lost no time in lavishing all the love of her idle soul on Matu-pala, the handsome ambassador of peace and of war, who, in his turn, preferred Lakha, one of the maids of honour; who again looked to the regent as the fountain of an honour still higher than her own, vice the king.

Now, it happened that in this city of Ujjayani, within sight of the palace, dwelt an austere Brahman and his devout wife. This couple were very pious. They fasted and refrained from drink; they stood on their heads; they held their arms for weeks in the air; they prayed till their knees were like pads; they disciplined themselves with scourges of wire; they walked about unclad in the cold season, and in summer they sat within a circle of flaming wood; in short they became the envy and admiration of all the second-class gods dwelling in the lower heaven; and in return for their piety a celestial messenger brought them an apple from the tree called Kalpavriksha, which would confer immortality on whomsoever should eat of it. But it was enough for only one person's immortality; it would not serve for two. At first the old Brahman was for making himself deathless; but his cleverer

wife, with as much craft as good sense in her meaning, prevailed on him to refrain; and rather to get the good reward which would be sure to be given them if they presented it to the raja. So the old Brahman took it to the court, gave it to Bhartari Raja, and brought away as much gold as he could carry. The raja rushed with the apple to his young queen Dangalah Rani, saying, "Eat this, Light of my Eyes! This fruit, Joy of my Heart! will make thee everlastingly young and beautiful!" The pretty queen, placing both hands upon her husband's bosom, kissed his eyes and lips, and sweetly smiling in his face—for great is the guile of women—whispered: "Eat it thyself, dear one, or at least share it with me; for what is life, and what is youth without the presence of those we love?" But the raja, whose heart was melted by those musical words, she being always so cold and repelling—he called it coy—put her away tenderly, and having explained that the fruit would serve for only one person, departed. Whereupon the pretty queen, sweetly smiling as before, slipped the precious present into her pocket and gave it to the handsome ambassador. He, wishing to please Lakha, gave it away to her; and she, seeking to rise at court by favour of the raja, presented it anew to him. And then the raja saw the full extent of his misery, and by what a round of deception the apple of immortality had come back to him. Loathing life and all its pleasures, he resolved to abandon the world, and end his days in the depth of a gloomy forest. But before he set out, he took care to cause Dangalah Rani to be summoned before him. He asked her what had become of the fruit he had given her: she replied that she had eaten it; upon which he showed her the apple, which caused her to stand silent and aghast before him. Then, giving careful orders for her being beheaded, he washed the fruit and ate it, and went out into the jungle as a jogi or religious mendicant, no one knowing what had become of him.

This was the history of Vikram's brother, the regent, and of what passed in the royal palace, during the absence of that Luminary of Heroism.

Meanwhile Vikram became weary of wandering about with his second son alone. To be sure his kingdom was well secured, though he did not know it, for Indra sent a div or giant to defend the city, and hold the throne until such time as its lawful possessor should put in an appearance. But

the wandering monarch began to reflect, that this dancing about from city to desert, and from desert to forest, half clothed, and always more than half hungry, afraid of wild beasts, and at all times ill at ease, was neither comfortable for himself nor dutiful to his various wives and their several offspring. He reflected, too, that the heir-apparent would probably make the worst possible use of the paternal absence, and that the kingdom had been left in the hands of an untried man, who for aught he knew might make the worst possible use of his trust. So he resolved to return forthwith to Ujjayani, more especially as by this time he had spied out all the weak points of friends and foes alike, and had nothing more to learn. And while these considerations were pressing on him, he heard a rumour that Bhartari the regent had abdicated his viceregal throne, and gone away into the forest; which rumour decided him on the spot. So he and his son went home, and got to the city gates just as the gong was striking the mysterious hour of midnight.

But they were not allowed to enter unmolested. A huge and hideous figure starting up barred the way, demanding in a thundering voice, who were they, and where going? Raja Vikram, choking with rage at such a reception, gave his royal name and address; but the giant, div or demon, Prithwi Pala by name, commanded that he should first fight to prove his title, after which, if showing that he was really the Sun of Heroism, he might enter. The warrior king cried "Sadhu!" wanting nothing better; and for all that the giant's fists were as large as water melons, and his knotted arms whistled through the air like falling trees; for all that the raja's head scarcely reached the giant's middle, and that the latter, each time he struck out, whooped so abominably loudly that no human nerves could remain unshaken; yet Vikram was not Vikram for nothing. Besides, the young prince aided by jumping on the div's naked toes, and sitting on his stomach when he was down; so both together they got Prithwi Pala into evil case, and the raja, sitting astride on his throat, dug both his thumbs into the monster's eyes, and threatened to make a second Polyphemus of him if he would not yield.

The giant, moderating the bellow of his voice, agreed to give the raja his life, in consideration of his own overthrow. And when the raja laughed scornfully at what seemed a mere piece of fustian, the giant

raising himself up into a sitting posture, began a solemn tale in solemn tones.

The story is too long (as long as the giant in fact) to be more than very closely condensed here, keeping to the leading lines only in so far as they relate to Vikram.

It seems that a certain jogi was Vikram's deadly enemy. He, an oilman's son, and the king, were all born in this same city of Ujjayani, in the same lunar mansion, in the same division of the great circle described upon the ecliptic, and in the same period of time. The jogi had already slain the oilman's son, and his own child; and was waiting now to compass the death of the king, in revenge for a practical joke which had been played on him in the days of Gandharba-Sena, when a pretty young woman of doubtful discretion made a promise to bring him to the court, bearing his child on his shoulder, he being then a famous devotee renowned throughout the universe for his austerities. When the saint found that he had been simply taken in by a designing little witch, and made into a court jest—that he had lost the fruits of his austerities to create a laugh among addle-pated courtiers, he cursed them all with terrible curses; took up his child again on his shoulder, and went back into the forest—where he slew him as his first offering of expiation. He then slew the oilman's son, suspended him head downwards from a mimosa tree in a cemetery; and was now designing to do the same kind office by Vikram. The oilman's son he had made into a baital or vampire. Wherefore said the giant to Vikram, among other useful counsels, "Distrust them that dwell amongst the dead, and remember that it is lawful and right to strike off his head that would slay thee." Then Prithwi Pala disappeared; and the king first feeling his bones to make sure they were all sound, went into his own again.

By-and-bye, after the coloured powders had been flung, the feasts made, and the rejoicings of Ujjayani at the return of the lawful ruler had become a little moderated, there came into the city a young merchant, called Mal Deo, with a train of loaded camels and elephants, and the reputation of immense wealth. He came one day into the palace court, where the king was sitting dispensing justice, and gave into his hand a fruit, which he had brought with him. He then spread a prayer carpet on the floor, remained a quarter of an hour, and went away. But the king was wary. The saint's warning remained in his mind,

and he gave the fruit to his maître d'hôtel, with orders to preserve it carefully. Every day the young merchant came to the court in the same way, and every day brought one single fruit. One day the king was in the royal stable when Mal Deo arrived with his offering; and as Vikram was thoughtfully tossing it in the air it fell from his fingers to the ground. Then the monkey, who was tethered among the horses to draw calamities from their heads, snatched it up and tore it open, when a ruby of such size and water came out as astonished all beholders.

The raja, now thoroughly angry and suspicious, asked Mal Deo what he meant by presuming to bring such costly gifts. On which the merchant demurely quoted the Shastras, where it is enjoined on men not to go empty-handed into the presence of rajas, spiritual teachers, judges, young maidens, and old women whose daughters they would marry. Mollified by the glib religiousness of the young man, and not displeased at finding that he had in his possession some half dozen or more of these rubies, which were of such value that the whole revenues of the kingdom could not purchase one, Vikram gave Mal Deo a robe of honour; then graciously asked him what he could do in return for such more than regal generosity? On which Mal Deo replied: that he was not Mal Deo a merchant, but Shanta-Shil, the devotee; and that all he asked of the king in return for the rubies, was to come to him on a certain moonless night, to a cemetery where he was going to perform incantations which would make the Eight Powers of Nature his. He was to bring with him his arms, and young Dharma Dwaj, his son, but no followers.

Vikram at first almost started when he heard of the cemetery, remembering the giant's words, but knowing now with whom he was dealing, composedly answered that he would come to the accursed place; and with this promise they parted.

The moonless night indicated by the jogi came. It was a Monday, and the king and his son passed out of the palace gates, and through the sleeping city to the abode of the dead. Arriving there, after a most uncomfortable and horrifying walk, they found Shanta-Shil, hideously painted, and nearly naked, sitting by a fire, and surrounded by demons and every loathsome and terrifying form that could be summoned from the face of the earth or the darker regions below, playing on a skull with two shank bones, and making a music therefrom as frightful as

his person. Father and son, nothing daunted, walked boldly forward and seated themselves by the jogi. They waited for some time in silence, and then the raja asked the devotee what commands there might be for them? Shanta-Shil desired them to go to a certain place where dead bodies were burned, and where, hanging from a mimosa tree, was a body which he was to bring to him immediately. So Vikram and his son rose up and departed for the place.

It was an awful night, and they had an awful walk, even worse than before, with company neither to be imagined nor described. At last they came to the burning place; where they suddenly sighted a tree which, from root to topmost bough, was a blaze of crimson flame. And hanging from this, head downward, was a nondescript thing, more like a flying fox than anything else: icy cold, and clammy as a snake; whose only sign of life was the whisking of a ragged little tail like a goat's. This was the oilman's son—the baital or vampire. After tremendous struggles and repeated failures, but by the grace of not knowing when he was beaten, and never giving in, Vikram at last conquered, the vampire saying on the seventh effort, "Even the gods cannot resist a thoroughly obstinate man," as he resignedly suffered himself to be thrust into a bag improvised out of the king's waist-cloth, and slung across his shoulders en route for the jogi, and the subjection of the Eight Powers of Nature. But on the way, being a loquacious demon, the vampire proposed to tell the king some stories, giving him good-naturedly a prefatal bit of advice, never to allow himself to be entrapped into giving an answer or an opinion, for if he should fail in this, then assuredly would he, the baital, slip back to his mimosa tree, and all the labour of the capture would have to be repeated. Then he began his stories.

Not being able to epitomise even one of them, we refer our readers to the book itself. There are eleven of them, for eleven times did the Sun of Heroism suffer himself to be entrapped into an answer, whereby the baital was able to wriggle himself free from his bag, and hang himself up by his toes again from a high branch of the burning mimosa tree. But the twelfth time Vikram had learnt a little discretion, so the journey was duly completed, and the baital flung into the jogi's magic circle. We will say no more. How Vikram fared, and how the jogi fared, and who slew

whom, that is which was able to "break-fast on his enemy ere his enemy could dine on him," is it not all to be found within the black and red covers which Ernest Grisct has so quaintly adorned? All that we would say is this: if such a story as we have epitomised can be got out of the prologue, what may not be expected from the body of the book?

LADY MACNAMARA'S STORY.

It was eight-and-thirty years ago, and I had been married five or six years, when I went to live at Manorbere Lodge. The ship in which my husband had been first lieutenant was paid off. He had got his rank as commander, but had no immediate prospect of employment afloat, so his mind naturally turned to the occupation he loved best, next to his profession—fox-hunting: a passion for which sport came to him by nature, as the second son of a Lincolnshire squire. His younger-son's portion, with my dowry and his pay, though altogether making up a comfortable income, would not suffice for that very expensive amusement, unless we could find a house in a good situation, at a moderate rent; and we were looking for such a house, when one day Dick came in, radiant with expectation, to tell me he had heard of one beyond the dreams of avarice, or rather of economy. It was in the heart of the shires, within easy reach of three first-rate packs, had capital stabling, and was all to be let by the year at a fabulously low rental.

It is a maxim with me that nothing is to be had for less than its value, so I was not quite so sanguine as Dick; but I agreed with him in thinking it worth while that he should run down and look at the place.

He went, and came back delighted. He had spared no pains to find out what there could be amiss with the house, but had come to the conclusion that it was almost faultless. Indeed, it seemed to him such a prize that he had feared to lose it by delay, and had taken it at once for a year certain. "I am sure you will like it, my love," he said. "It is an old house, a great deal larger and handsomer than we want, but that does not matter." I was quite content so that he pleased himself, and a very few days saw us settled at Manorbere.

I found the place all that Dick had

said it was. The house as it now stood had apparently been only a wing of the ancient mansion. Part of the principal building had been completely pulled down, but for some reason or other a portion abutting upon the present house had been left standing, and was converted, the lower part into a cart-house, and the first-floor into a place for carpenter's work, lumber, and so forth. On the ground-floor the communication had been walled up, where a door had formerly opened upon a passage running nearly the length of the present house. A similar corridor ran along the first-floor, and here the disused part of the house was divided from the dwelling only by a strong oaken door, heavily barred and bolted. A staircase led up from the ground-floor to this end of the corridor; but it was seldom used, as we inhabited the rooms at the other extremity, and the servants' chambers were reached also by a different stair. The door itself looked as if it could resist everything except treachery in the garrison, and even a traitor would have had some difficulty in removing the defences, so rusted were they in their places.

There was nothing at all gloomy about the house. The rooms were large and light, with the ample windows characteristic of English houses erected before the imposition of the window-tax gave our builders their present traditions. The principal sitting-room was a very large one on the ground-floor, looking nearly south, and catching all the sunshine in its bay-windows. These opened on a raised terrace, beneath which was a pretty flower-garden, and there was a paddock with fine trees beyond. The stables were of much later date than the house, and were excellent.

Of course we soon made acquaintance with our neighbours, and the assemblies to see the hounds throw off on a fine morning were very pleasant and sociable. We had no close carriage, and our house was at a considerable distance from any visitable families, so at first we declined all dinner invitations. But that sort of thing never goes on long when those concerned are still young, cheerful, and sociable, and very soon we got into the way of going frequently to dine and sleep at our neighbours' places. At the very first of these dinner parties, the truth came out about Manorbere.

"It is very nice having you and Captain Macnamara at Manorbere," said a certain

lively Mrs. Brodrick to me, when we ladies went to the drawing-room after dinner. "I do so hate having a house shut up; and, indeed, there was a talk last year of its being pulled down, since nobody would take it."

"But why would nobody take it? I think it so charming," said I.

"Well, perhaps it is foolish; but you know a great many people really do not like living in a house that has such a name."

"A name for what?"

"Being haunted."

"Haunted!"

"Good gracious! did not you know about the ghost?"

I burst out laughing. "So that is the reason of our getting it so cheap? I am really very much obliged to the ghost."

"How odd that you should not have heard of it! But I am so sorry I mentioned it. You are so much alone there. I hope it won't make you uncomfortable."

"Thank you; it only makes me laugh. But do tell me the story of the house."

"Hush!" said another lady, "don't talk about it now. Here comes Mrs. Dormer" (our hostess), "and she never quite likes the subject."

My curiosity, however, being roused, I begged Mrs. Brodrick the first time an opportunity offered for a tête-à-tête to give me particulars as to our tiers-parti at Manorbere. And this is the substance of her narrative:

The last family that had lived in the house was that of Colonel Fearon, a widower with three daughters. They were a very pleasant, cheerful set; hospitable as far as their means, which were not very large, would allow; and ready to promote or to join in anything that was proposed in the way of social amusement. But unfortunately a few months after their arrival the colonel got a bad fall out hunting, and became for a time a confirmed invalid. He recovered ultimately, but at that period it was feared that he never would be himself again. His nervous system was so affected by the blow he had received on the spine, that he could bear hardly any noise or company, and he was so weak as to be reduced to a wheel-chair in which to take air and exercise. The family had selected for their own occupation the same set of rooms we had chosen for ourselves at the opposite end of the corridor from the condemned door, and the rooms near to it were reserved for guests. The hitherto gay and lively house

had, however, for some time become quite changed in character, the girls giving up all society at home uncomplainingly, for their father's sake. Eleanor, the eldest, thought, however, after a time, that it was a pity her young sisters, Effie and Lucy, should be debarred from taking part in the gaieties suited to their age which were going on during the winter; so the girls took it in turn to go out two and two together, some neighbouring matron being always ready to act as chaperon when they joined her at the ball or *soirée*. On one of these occasions two young friends who had come to the same party from some distance on the other side of Manorbere, had been offered a night's lodging at the latter place to save them the long winter drive after midnight, and also that they might accompany the Fearons to a ball on the ensuing evening. Though it was not very late when the girls returned home, the invalid had retired to rest, and Eleanor was ready to follow his example, when she heard her sisters and their friends coming up-stairs, and went out in her dressing-gown to meet them, and see that they had all things comfortable in their rooms. The girls were in high spirits, and, though subduing their voices lest they should waken their father, Eleanor feared that some incautious laugh or exclamation might disturb him; so enjoining silence by a gesture, she led the way to the chamber at the further end of the corridor which had been prepared for her guests, stirred the fire into a bright blaze, lighted the candles, and told them now they might laugh and chatter their fill. The young folks did not hesitate to avail themselves of the permission, and hung over the fire discussing the party of that evening, and the prospects of the morrow's ball, till Eleanor declared she must take her sisters away, or they would talk all night. She had twice risen with this intention without getting time to follow her, and was now standing with the door half open in her hand waiting for them, when they saw her suddenly put her finger on her lips, and peep cautiously out; then she set down her candle, and stepped softly into the passage. The others ceased talking in a minute, and looked inquiringly towards her. "What is it, Eleanor?" whispered Lucy, coming to the door.

"The most extraordinary thing! I thought I heard the door open."

"What door?" said Effie.

"Why the great barred door."

"My dear Nellie, you must be dreaming.

It is time we went to bed, indeed," said Effie laughing, and taking up her candle. Eleanor took hers also, but instead of returning to her room, walked straight up to the door and examined it closely, followed by Lucy, who looked at her in smiling wonder.

"Are you satisfied, dear?" said she, pointing to the cobwebs which in many places stretched across from the door to its lintel.

"Yes, I must have been mistaken. But it is very odd!"

"What did you hear, Nellie," eagerly asked the others, coming to their room door.

"The first time I signed to you to be silent, I thought I heard footsteps coming gently and cautiously up the stair, and fancied it was one of the maids. They know I do not allow them to sit up so late, and I waited to see who it was, stealing up this way where they have no business. But instead of passing by this room, the footsteps seemed to stop at the top of the stairs, and then the door turned slowly on its hinges."

"Did you see it?" asked Lucy.

"Oh! no. It only sounded so."

"The wind or something."

"Perhaps. Now do go to bed, children." And they all separated.

The next evening one of their visitors, Isabel Murray, being rather tired, declined to go to the ball, and said she would prefer staying to keep company with Lucy, whose turn it was to remain with her father. After he had gone to bed, the two girls became so absorbed in a game of chess that the time slipped away unobserved, and they then bethought them of sitting up for their sisters, to give them what is called in Ireland, "a raking pot of tea" on their return. The bright idea was immediately carried out. The tea-things were set in the guest-chamber, the fire was made up, the maids were sent to bed, and the girls, after partially undressing, met together wrapt in their dressing-gowns to enjoy the vigil. They had brought up their chess-board and books, but presently agreed that if they took a nap they would be all the fresher by-and-bye; so curling themselves up on a sofa they were soon asleep. Perfect silence reigned throughout the house, and in the room nothing was heard but the soft breathing of the sleepers. Suddenly and simultaneously both awoke and sat up; Lucy's little dog at the same time starting from his slumbers and pricking his ears.

"Is it the carriage?" said Isabel Murray.

"I don't know. Something woke me, but I can't tell what. Yes, it must be," continued Lucy, as the dog went sniffing to the door, and she opened it and looked out. "I hear footsteps, but there is no light. How quietly they have come in!"

Just then Pincher, who had run out when the door was opened, came cowering back with drooping tail, and at the same moment came the grating sound of a door turning on rusty hinges, and then quietly closed. Isabel sprang to Lucy's side, and, softly closing all but a chink of the door, stood listening. Nothing more was heard. The girls looked at each other, and drew a long breath. "There's something wrong here, Lucy," said Isabel. Lucy quickly shut the door, and bolted it.

"Oh! Isabel, I am so frightened! Only think if anybody can get in here in the dead of the night! We may all be murdered!"

"We must tell Eleanor, and, of course, it must be looked to. But the strange thing is, that the door seems as if it had not been opened for a century."

"Oh dear, that's nothing. These people are up to all sorts of tricks——"

"What people?"

"Why housebreakers and burglars!"

"I don't think it can be a burglar," said Isabel, "as he has been here already, and nothing appears to have been stolen. Perhaps one of the maids has a *follower* whom she lets in by stealth. What is there on the other side of that door?"

"I don't know. Oh yes, I do! A sort of lumber-room and carpenter's workroom."

"We ought to go to-morrow and examine it on that side. I do not think there is any danger for to-night, as the intruder, whoever he be, seems to have departed. What's become of Pincher? Did you shut him out?"

On examination the dog was found under the bed, pressed closely against the wall, and trembling all over. Lucy had some difficulty in coaxing him out, and even when she had got him in her arms her caresses failed to restore him to his usual spirits. "Is he ill, poor fellow?" asked Isabel.

"Only frightened, I think; but he is usually so courageous! I cannot understand it. You may be sure he has seen some one who has terrified him somehow. I wish the others were come home!"

After this the raking pot of tea was not so jovial an affair as they had intended. The two watchers had not quite got over their

alarm, and the others heard their account with anxiety and uneasiness. Eleanor agreed that the first thing to do was to scrutinise both sides of the door, but cautioned them all to keep entire silence on the subject, meantime.

The next day they made their investigation of the carpenter's workroom, which was entered by an outside wooden stair. Eleanor made the pretence of wanting a piece of old-seasoned wood for a drawing-board, which gave them an excuse for poking about unsuspected. Not only were the door and all its adjuncts as rusty and cobweb-tapestried here as on the inside; but they found heaped against it a quantity of wood which had been cut up for making new hurdles.

"They might be put there only for a blind," Isabel suggested in a whisper; so the astute Eleanor put a leading question immediately.

"Have you not been a long time about those hurdles, Jones?"

"Well, ma'am, the hurdles is ready, and has been any time these three weeks. It ain't my fault they bean't put up long ago, and I'd be glad to get 'em out of my way lumberin' here. Perhaps you'd speak about it?"

Eleanor promised to do so, and remarking that her father's illness had caused some neglect of out-door work, gave directions about her board, and withdrew.

"No light thrown on the mystery yet," she observed, as they walked away. "That door cannot have been opened for years, I am positive." The Murrays were to leave the lodge next day. "I shall move into that room to-morrow. When the servants know one of the family is close by, they will hardly dare to carry on any clandestine meeting."

"But that's no good," said Lucy; "if it is one of the servants the man will be let in elsewhere. Dear Nellie, do get to the bottom of it. I am sure if you do not, I never can feel that we are safe for a single night."

"My child, it is not proved that anybody did come in. On the contrary, it seems impossible."

"We will watch to-night, anyhow," said Effie.

When night came, however, Eleanor desired her sisters would go to their own rooms, as she thought so many of them together could hardly keep quiet enough to avoid giving some warning to the mysterious visitor. She also begged the Mur-

rays to go to bed as soon as they were ready; and they had done so, though they could not sleep. And now, in the dead of the night, she sat in their room, the candle closely shaded and the door ajar, breathlessly awaiting she knew not what. She had, without saying anything about it, brought with her one of her father's pistols. The fire burned low and red, and everything was profoundly still, when the ominous creaking struck on their terrified ears. Eleanor quickly seized her candle and ran into the passage, followed by the other two, who had instantly sprung out of bed. Footsteps were distinctly audible descending the stairs. "Who is there?" demanded Eleanor. "Answer, or I shall fire!" No voice replied. They held their candles over the balustrade, but no one was to be seen. At the same moment Lucy darted from her room, and came down the corridor to join the group. "Is it broken?" said she, hurriedly.

"Broken? What?" Lucy ran past them to the stairs, bidding them follow.

"Look here," said she, showing them a thread, the two ends of which lay across the stair. "I tied this to-night to the balustrade, and fastened it into the wall at the opposite side. You see it is broken in two."

"My child," said Eleanor, "a cotton thread might easily snap, merely from being stretched too tight. That is no proof of any one having passed by. Indeed, I am certain nobody did, for I was out on this landing before he could by any possibility have got down-stairs, and I must have seen him."

"How brave you are, Eleanor!" said Isabel, glancing at the pistol, and thence to her calm face; and shivering with fear and cold she crept back to bed with her sister. As she carefully bolted her door inside, she could not repress an exclamation of thanksgiving that this was to be their last night in that dangerous house.

Eleanor now declared her conviction that the mysterious noises were produced by some occult vibration or echo, as is not uncommonly the case in old houses, and that they had nothing alarming in them. Lucy, however, would not be persuaded. Though she did not openly assert her incredulity, she ventured by herself to the terrible spot next night when all had retired, and tied a pack-thread firmly to the balustrade, fastening it with a tack to the opposite wall. Waking in the morning almost as soon as it was light, she immedi-

ately ran to look at her trap, and hurried back to Eleanor with the intelligence that the packthread was broken!

"How those stairs creak at the end of the passage!" said Eleanor to her maid, as she was dressing her hair that morning. She had chosen that moment because from the position Mrs. Wilkins then occupied behind her chair, her mistress could watch the expression of her countenance in the looking-glass. "I heard them creaking quite loudly under somebody's footsteps after I came up to bed last night. I can't think what took any one that way."

"None does go that way, *never*," said Mrs. Wilkins, emphatically.

"It is not the proper way, certainly, as there is the back-stair from the offices. But I have heard persons going up, or down, while the Miss Murrays were here."

"I'll undertake to say you were mistaken, ma'am. Not a servant in the house would go up or down them stairs after dark. Not for a thousand pounds, ma'am."

"What do you mean, Wilkins?"

"I mean, ma'am, as they has a bad name. Them's the parts that's haunted."

"*Haunted!* Rubbish. Who put that into your head?"

"You may call it rubbish, Miss Fearon," said Wilkins, resentfully; "but words can't alter things. Them stairs is haunted; all that knows about the place will tell you as good; Sarah, as lived here with a former family, she know it well. But she don't mind, because she says the ghost never did no harm as long as it warn't interfered with."

"I thought you had more sense, Wilkins," was all Eleanor replied, as she left the room to go down to breakfast. The thought, however, did come across her that this story had perhaps been impressed on the minds of the other servants by Sarah, in order to keep the coast clear for any operations she might wish to carry on under the rose. What these could be, Eleanor could not divine, but she did not feel altogether comfortable. A vague feeling of suspicion and doubt took possession of her, and, with that subtle infection which some attribute to animal magnetism, her uneasiness seemed gradually to spread through the whole family: the colonel alone remaining unaffected by it. Her sisters became silent and abstracted, as if always on the watch. The maids went about in pairs, and were found holding whispered colloquies behind doors. The butler, under pretence of black-beetles in the pantry,

"which he could not abide no how," got permission to remove his sleeping quarters into closer proximity with the footman. At last, Eleanor felt it necessary, unwilling as she was to annoy him, to speak to her father on the subject. Her fears of any ill-effect upon him were soon set at rest. The colonel's nervous malady was purely physical, and the old habits of ready decision and action reasserted their force when called upon. He listened to his daughter's statement with attention, questioned her carefully, and came to the conclusion that a thorough investigation must be made. Without further loss of time he wrote to the inspector of police for the district, requesting him to call privately at Manorbere Lodge as soon as he could; and desired that in the mean time the subject should be entirely dropped, so that the nocturnal intruder should not be put on his guard.

The inspector soon made his appearance, causing himself to be announced as the builder from Barton, come to see about certain repairs; in this character he was able to go over every portion of the house after holding a consultation with the colonel and the ladies. Before he left, it was settled that two constables should be sent to pass the night at the Lodge, unknown to the servants. They were to be let in by Miss Fearon, at a door opening from the terrace to one of the sitting-rooms, after the house had been closed for the night. This was easily effected; and the men, with dark lanterns, were stationed one at the foot of the stairs, the other on the landing half way up. They had been here in perfect silence and darkness nearly an hour, when the sound of a heavy door grating on rusty hinges, made the one on the landing grasp his truncheon and hold his lantern in readiness. Footsteps came softly down, and something seemed to brush by. He struck at it as it passed, and at the same time turned on his light, calling, "Look out below, mate!" Nothing was visible. There was a low moaning cry as he struck, but he felt no resistance. The man at the foot of the stairs heard the sound, quickly turned his lantern on in that direction, and rushed down the passage as if in pursuit, followed by the other at full speed. The noise roused some of the household, who, when they had summoned courage to appear, were confounded at finding themselves met by guardians instead of disturbers of the peace.

The two policemen were utterly puzzled. Both had distinctly heard the great door open, and the descending footsteps, as well as the low cry, like the cry of some one in fear or pain. Each had felt something flit by, but both described it as more like a cold blast of wind than any bodily thing. They had both run to try and prevent its escape, but on reaching the end of the passage, where it was crossed by another in the form of a T, nothing was to be seen. They were quite certain that no door had been opened on either side, and this part of the house terminated in the cross passage, the only access to the principal sitting-rooms and vestibule being through a passage-room, or the kitchen, which was built out. Both these doors of communication were always locked at night, and were now fast. The rooms were examined, but no traces of any invader were perceptible in either. While this was going on below, Eleanor, who had sat up in her father's room, had, at the first sound of any movement, gone at once to the bedrooms occupied by the maids, every one of whom, including the suspected Sarah, she found quietly asleep.

After this signal failure on the part of the police, the ghost became an established fact, and the place became uninhabitable. Servant after servant gave warning; Mrs. Wilkins became hysterical; the cook took to drinking—"her spirits was that low," she said in excuse; and, except the stoical Sarah, who "never knowed the ghost do no harm as long as it was let alone," everybody was more or less unnerved.

A few weeks after these occurrences the colonel's medical attendant having advised his trying some new galvanic treatment, the family had to move up to town. Effie and Lucy were glad enough to go, both sharing, to a certain degree, in the alarm felt by the servants, though each in her different way. Effie inclined to the supernatural view, while Lucy held fast to her burglarious theory, for, she said, "How could a ghost, an immaterial being, break her thread and string?"

It was now late in the spring, and most of the neighbouring families had left the country: so the Fearons had not many adieux to make, except among the few poor people with whom they held relations, Manorbere being removed from any closely-inhabited part of the county. There was an old bed-ridden woman, to whom the girls had shown kindness, and they went over one morning to pay her their farewell visit. The family had been much liked,

and their sudden departure was a regret to all. "Ah, dear!" said the old dame, "I heerd as how you was a goin' to flit! Well, it will be a loss to me, though I did not see ye often, bein' at a distance. But it was something to think of, that I might have a look of your bright faces when you stopped in your rides to say a kind word, or bring me a little dainty nows and thens. I'm main sorry to lose ye, young ladies, but I ain't no ways surprised. None does stay long at Manorbere. The ghost drives 'em out, all on 'em."

"You don't seem to believe us when we say it is on account of papa's health that we are going away. But you know he came to these parts expressly for the hunting; and as, since his accident he has never been able to go out, there is nothing to keep us here."

"Ah! yes. No doubt there's reasons. There's always reasons. But still it comes to this; none does stay in that house; and it's my belief the ghost drives 'em away, say what they will."

"But what *is* the ghost? What does it do? What brings it there? Do tell us," said Effie.

"Well, ladies, I can only tell you what I've heerd. You see, the Clendons—the family as Manorbere belonged to—was always a baddish lot. They were all wild from father to son, and they drank, and they gambled, and they was in bad ways from year's end to year's end, and run though most of their money. And then they would go abroad out of the way, and the place was shut up, and let go to rack and ruin. The old house was pulled down because they thought it was not worth repairing. (It had got into the creditors' hands by that.) Ah! it was a fine place was the Lodge when I first remember it, afore the trees was cut down, and the park ploughed up, and sold off bit by bit."

"How long ago was that?"

"A matter of fifty years—or nigher sixty maybe. When the last Clendons come back here to bide, there warn't above half left. But the great house was there still: only part was shut up, because it warn't sound and safe. They was a glad-some set, them Clendons, but the gentry about did not take to them much, and I don't think they cared whether they did or no. They had their friends from London staying down here, months together, and French folk; and the goin's on at the

Lodge was the talk of the country. There was gaming, and dancing, and play-acting, it was said, goin' on every night; and there was some new dances they had learned in France, and they was thought undecent here in England. I must say they were pleasant to look at, all those people—pretty, and gay, and merry. I would go out to my gate to see 'em come by, such a many together, all talking and laughing, riding and driving, and pic-nicking about. They didn't care what they spent, you see, the Clendons didn't, for they didn't pay anybody, and they knew it couldn't last; so it was a short life and a merry for them. They lived mostly in the new wing, what is the house now. It was called new, though I heerd say more nor a hundred years old; and they threw two rooms into one to make the drawin'-room where they had their dances and romps. Well, the nearest neighbours then, was the Perigals, of Dour Grange. Very strict folk they was to be sure. Never no junketings nor gay doin's was heerd of in that house; no laughing nor singing, except it was hymns; but always grave faces and solemn voices. And as to plays, or dancings, or cards, or, for the matter of that, games of any sort; they thought them things was so many traps laid by the devil to catch souls. It was always preaching and praying that went on there; so you may suppose, ladies, what the Clendons and their doin's was to them. Mr. Perigal said 'they stank in his nostrils,' and he always looked as if they did; and the more the Manorbere people racketed, the closer the Perigals kept to their strict ways. As ill-luck would have it, just afore this time Mr. Perigal's sister-in-law died, and her daughter bein' left a orphan, come to live with her uncle and aunt at the Grange. Poor child! I did pity her. She was a bit flighty in her ways, but she had always been used to a cheerful home and young folks for companions, and the Grange was no better than a prison to her. To make a long story short, she somehow got knowledge of the Clendon ladies. It was quite innocently at first. She met them driving out, in a lane where they had got into some strait with the ponies, or lost their way, I think. She tried to direct them, but they didn't understand quite, so they begged her to get into the pony-chaise and go along o' them, and show them; and she did. She was a pretty creatur, and taking, and so were they, to do them justice; and when she got down and left

them, they said they hoped to see her again. Her uncle and aunt were in a sad way when they heard what had chanced. She didn't make no concealments about it at first, and I do think she was druv to it after, along o' their bein' so very strict and hard upon her at home. She did lead a dreary life of it. She was never trusted out alone after that. She was not strong in her health, and she had a pony to ride, which was a'most her only pleasure; but she never went out without the old manservant behind, to see she come to no harm, unless Mr. Perigal was with her himself. One day who should she fall in with, but a pic-nic party from Manorbere, and the ladies she had met the day they lost themselves come up so free and pleasant, and asked her to join their lunch. She come round old Richard with her pretty coaxing ways to keep it secret from her guardians; and so by little and little she got to make meetings with her new friends. Bad friends they was to her, but I don't think they meant her any harm. They liked her, and thought to amuse her: only they led her into deceit and false ways. One of the young gentlemen was taken with her pretty face, and got a sweethearting of her; and one day when they were dancing on the grass, he wanted her to be his partner in one of their new-fangled dances. Of course she knowed nothin' of it, though she was used to dances in her own home, and could foot it in a country dance with the best of 'em. Bless her, she was as lissom as a fairy! So, then, they said they must teach her; and she took to it like natur', and said there never was anything so delightful. Then they told her they practised it every night at the Lodge, and she must come there and make one of them. For a little time she stood out that she musn't, and she durstn't, and what would come of it if uncle and aunt found out! 'Well, and if they did, they can't send you to Bogey,' said Clendon, who never feared God nor devil. And they all laughed at her, and persuaded of her, so at last it was settled how it should be. After she was gone to her room at night—there was prayers at the Grange at half-past nine, and when they were over the house was shut up, and all the lights was put out, and everybody went to bed—she was to slip out by her window, and her young man was to meet her, and take her to Manorbere and in by the old part of the house, and through the door at the top of the staircase (what's barred up this many a year now), and so

down to the dancing-room; and when their jinks was over, some on 'em took her home again, all on the sly. I don't know how long this went on, but not many times, I should think, or she'd likely got caught. It would have been best for her if she had, poor thing! But one night, as she was whirling round and round with her lover, and his arm round her, he felt her lean heavy all of a sudden, and then slide away to the ground. They all stopped in a fright, and lifted her up, and carried her to the sofa; but no burnt feathers nor vinegar, nor anything else, try what they might, would bring her to. They rode off like mad for a doctor, and he come galloping back with 'em; but he could do nothing. She was dead!"

"Good heavens! how shocking!" cried Effie.

"Ah! you may say so, miss; cut off like that in the midst of her sins!"

"There's no sin in dancing," said Lucy.

"But there is in disobedience, miss, and deceit! The doctor he said it was disease of the heart; but Mr. Perigal, he never would be persuaded but what it was a judgment on her for seeking after carnal pleasures; and he cursed the Clendons and all their lot, as the devil's imps misleading the unwary. They was more strict and serious than ever, after that, at the Grange, and the house was like a tomb for gloominess; for they both loved their niece after their fashion, and they looked on her as a lost soul. Though, for my part, I can't help thinking the Almighty might, mayhap, have mercy on a poor misguided child."

"You are a better Christian than they were," said Lucy.

"But what was the end of the Clendons?" asked Effie.

"Well! Even they seemed sobered like by that shocking night's work. The party broke up soon after, and all went away for good. The family never come back, and I've heerd as how the last on 'em died in forrin parts. The creditors come and took possession, and the property was cut up and sold off. Several different families has had the house, but none for long. They do say that of a night, when all is quiet, that old door is heerd to open softly, creak, creak, and then footsteps go stealing downstairs; and then, by-and-bye, they come creeping up again, and the door creaks again, and sounds as if it was to shut to. But nothing is ever seen." . . .

Effie listened to this recital with a sort of fascinated terror, and repeated it with

all its eerie particulars to her father and Eleanor when they got home.

"And you believe it really is a ghost going to a ball, do you, my credulous little Effie?" said the colonel, pulling her ear playfully.

"But the noises, papa! We all heard them."

"I have no doubt you did, and that the noises exist, though we have not been able to account for them. But don't you see, my dear girls, that it was the noises that were the cause of the ghost; not the ghost that was the cause of the noises?"

When we got home, of course, I told all this to Captain Macnamara, who, like all sailors, loved a ghost-story. But neither of us was troubled with nervous terrors. On inquiry we found that the sad story of the poor little truant girl was substantially true; and then the matter passed from our minds.

It was now April, very fine weather, and warm for the time of year. Tempted by the beauty of one fragrant evening we had lingered on the terrace, on returning from a stroll in the garden after our usual late dinner, till I was quite tired. So leaving Dick to finish his last cigar, I stepped in to the drawing-room by the window, and sat down to the pianoforte. It was quite dusk indoors, but I did not care to ring for lights till he came in, so I continued playing little bits of soft music by heart, till at last I fell upon one of an old set of Beethoven's waltzes, which had not come into my head for a long time. While I was playing, I heard the door to which my back was turned, open gently; but no one came in. I thought it was my husband, and that he was stopping to listen, as the waltz was an old favourite of his.

"Is that you, Dick?" said I. "Will you order tea?"

No answer. I turned round, and there, looking in at the half-opened door, as if the person were standing behind it, I saw a face so strange, so wan and wistful-looking, that I uttered an involuntary cry. In a moment Dick sprang in at the window, and I pointed to the door. "Who is it?" said I, faintly. He went to the door. "There is no one here." It opened into an ante-room which he crossed, and looked out into the corridor.

"What was it, dear?" said he, coming back. "You look scared." I told him what it was.

"The housemaid coming to see whe-

ther the room was put to rights, I suppose."

"I suppose it must have been. But oh, Dick, you can't think how weird, and ghastly, and odd the face looked!"

"Why, so does yours at this moment, love; and most faces do look pale and queer at twilight: especially peeping in at a door. Let us have lights."

He rang the bell. The servants came in with the lamps and tea, and I persuaded myself I had been mistaken. But somehow I did not like to think of that face at the door: and I shunned making the inquiry, whether the housemaid *had* looked in.

A few weeks later, we were to go up to town to pass the London season with my parents, who had taken a house there; and we had engaged to pay visits to various relations in the country afterwards, before returning to Manorbere for the cub-hunting in September. The members of the hunt who happened to be still remaining in the neighbourhood had got up a parting dinner, at which Captain Macnamara was to make one. It took place at Barton, a town five or six miles from us, and at an early hour, because some of the party had a long ride home afterwards. I dined alone at our usual time. I walked in the garden a little with our favourite terrier, Fussy, and then I sat lazily enjoying my tea and a new book till I found myself beginning to nod. Looking at my watch I saw it was already eleven o'clock, and knowing that my husband might be expected home in half an hour or so, I preferred waiting up for him to going to bed; so I went to the piano to rouse myself. Fussy, who was very fond of music, sat up, stretched himself, and followed me to the instrument, where he placed himself at my feet. After playing several pieces, the old Beethoven waltzes recurred to my memory and I began them.

I must make the confession that after the evening when that very unpleasant face had looked in so mysteriously, I had been weak enough to have the piano moved so as to sit facing any one who might come to the door. There was only one lamp in the room, on my reading table: so the other end of the spacious apartment was imperfectly lighted. Looking up as I played, to my astonishment I saw in the distance what I thought to be two white mice capering about on the floor. I left the piano and went to the spot, but nothing was to be seen. This did not surprise me,

as naturally the timid creatures would run away at the slightest movement; but being very fond of animals I wanted to discover them, and sought under the sofa and chairs, and in every corner of the room. All in vain. At last, hoping that if I kept quiet they might come out again, and wondering at the music seeming to attract them, I sat down once more to my waltzes. In an instant, there they were again, going round and round with the greatest regularity; but the moment I stopped playing, or moved from my place, they were gone. This happened three or four times, and the oddest thing was that Fussy, who was rabid after rats and mice, instead of flying at these little creatures crept close to me and crouched trembling by my side. I was glad of it, for I did not wish to have the pretty dancers killed, and I had just recommenced my tune for the fourth time when the door opened, and my husband entered and waltzed up the room towards me while the little creatures kept time with him perfectly, seeming to follow his steps.

"Dick! Dick!" said I, without stopping my music; "look there! Did you ever see anything so curious?"

He paused, looked in the direction indicated by my eyes, and then in a tone of utter amazement, exclaimed:

"Feet! by Heaven!"

"What?" cried I, starting up.

He stood as if petrified. Nothing was to be seen of the strange apparition. I told him what had happened, and that I believed them to be white mice that I had seen.

"Mice!" said he. "As sure as I stand here, it was a little pair of feet in white satin shoes! Go back and play."

I did so.

"There they are again, by Heavens! Come quickly."

I ran to the end of the room, but no trace of them appeared.

Next morning we started for London in the full expectation of returning to Manorbere early in September. But we were summoned in the beginning of that month to what proved to be the death-bed of my dear father, and changes in the family arrangements consequent upon that event kept us some weeks away.

During this time an uncle of my husband's was appointed to the governorship of a colony, and wrote to offer his nephew the post of naval aide-de-camp, which he gladly accepted. Before the year was out, we had sailed for our new destination. When

we came back to England, the haunted house had ceased to exist. A railway company had bought it and ran its iron road clean across the pretty garden. The house was razed to the ground, the trees were felled, and corn now grows on the scene of the ghost's waltz.

For some time Dick and I kept the story of the ghost's waltz strictly to ourselves; but the public mind is now so well prepared for the reception of marvels, that I have no hesitation in desiring its acceptance of this authentic little history. Accustomed as every one is, now-a-days, to hear—though certainly not to see—how gentlemen who print their indisputable experiences can elongate themselves, flatten themselves, graze themselves against ceilings, and flit in and out of three-pair-of-stair windows; how instruments of music can play for their own amusement in odd corners out of humanity's reach, or fly about in the air, while human beings float among them; how hands, unattached (like retired colonels), can gather flowers and crown poets; and how spiritual beings can return from the grave, to enjoy a game of romps under a loo-table, or talk more dreary nonsense than they talked in life, if possible; there surely can be no difficulty in believing the simple fact of a poor little pair of feet in white satin shoes returning to this world, at the summons of a favourite tune, to finish a dance unexpectedly cut short by ruthless Death!

GRETCHEN'S GUEST.

THE great town that to-day is full of life and stir was at that time not thought of. Where the sunshine falls now upon the brilliant shops, upon the gay carriages, upon the hurrying crowd, it lay then upon sweet meadow grass, unbroken, save by the passing clouds, or the shadow of the kine in the silent fields, or the robber crows that lived in their stronghold in the ancient forest hard by, and wheeled in daring foray above the newly ploughed land.

The grand market-place and the stately squares, the noble cathedral church, with its shrines, and carvings, and painted windows, was then but a city underground, reposing in quarries and mines, or in the heart of greenwood trees, awaiting the call to its new life. For the town, whither on market-days the peasants' wives rode with their well-stowed panniers, and whither the maidens went decked in all their bravery to mass or fair; the town, with its

ten thousand indwellers, its rich abbey, its sleek burgomasters and stalwart men-at-arms, and which has now but a tumble-down, decayed, almshousy sort of an existence; was then more than a league away from the little hamlet that is to-day a city. I was going to say that what it is had nothing to do with what it was; but I retract. It has everything in the world to do with it. With the time when the populous streets were mere forest paths, and when the din of the great town was only the clang of the forge iron, or the splash of the mill-stream.

Your hand, and we will cross the planks that bridge the flux of the past; here, somewhat decayed and insecure, there, slippery, and overgrown with the green deposit of years.

So, now we are over. The hard stony lineaments of the city lose their rigidity in the waning light. They become impalpable with something of dream-wavering, reconstruct themselves into their original combinations of rock and wood, and stand out in solemn beauty beneath the stars. Pointed arch and flying buttress of the great church melt into dim vistas of forest trees springing towards heaven, with the delicate tracery of the frost carving upon their branches. The roar of the city softens into a hum, and resolves itself into a soothing sound of falling water, as the mill-wheel goes its round. The echo of the clocks that have but now chimed the hour from tower and steeple, circles out into the air, and comes faintly back through the twilight years in the music of the Christmas bells from that old town more than a league and centuries away. And now it grows darker and darker; we can no longer distinguish the track by which we came, for the fast-falling snow obliterates every path. We can no longer hear falling water or Christmas bells through the pleasant night stillness, for the winter storm howls through the pines and around the mill, as if the evil ones had been exorcised by the holy sound, and wailed in their agony of impotent despair.

Little Gretchen lay in her little bed in the mill-chamber on Christmas Eve long ago. In all the mill-house there was not one living creature but herself and the old blackbird that hung in his wicker cage in the kitchen below; for Hans, the miller, was carousing with some of his boon companions at the ale-house in the distant town, and Fritz, his man, had saddled the old horse, and jogged off as soon as his master's back was turned; for he knew very well

that he was safe for that night. The blackbird slept soundly, with his head tucked warmly beneath his wing; Gurtha, the wicked watchdog in the yard, lay dreaming in her house, curled up out of the reach of the drifting snow. Even the people of the hamlet were a league off, hearing the midnight mass in the great abbey church. Only little Gretchen lay awake, with her blue eyes full of tears, as she thought how lonely she was. She had seen, from the mill window, the neighbours all passing in their holiday clothes—some in carts and some on horses; and the mothers had their children with them; even the little babies in their arms going to the great church in the town. Then she thought how fine it must be to be going there, to see the lights, and hear the chanting of the choristers, and smell the incense, and watch the priests in their purple and golden robes, grander than the emperor himself. But above all, O, far above! to kneel before the shrine of our Lady with the Child, who held out his hands so lovingly; and to say the prayer that her mother had taught her, before she went to heaven!

Her tears flowed fast when she thought there would be no one to carry even her name to the holy feet; and she said mournfully, "Alas! When He shall see all the neighbours there without me, He will be angry, or, perhaps, He will forget me, and He will not think of me for a whole year long!" And she almost felt that she must put on her little mantle, and run to present herself, and ask Him to remember her; but although she did not dread the darkness of the road, or the wolves that lived in the forest, she feared her father's anger. For stern of brow and hard of speech was the miller.

So little Gretchen had stood gazing out at the whirling eddies of snow until long after the last passer-by had gone, and she thought as she watched the pure white flakes that never seemed to touch the earth, "Perhaps in those snow robes the good angels fly to-night, and some of them will watch beside our door until the bright sun shines out to-morrow!" And she said, for she was but a little child: "O Heaven birds! if to-night you fly and perch upon the church-roof, ask Him to bless Gretchen so far away!" Then there was a pause for a moment, as if they had been really waiting for her message, and presently round and round, faster and faster, they flew past the houses and above the forest, towards the distant town. But soon the white wings had also passed, and

the thick darkness came up from the ground shadows, and sat rocking and moaning in the tops of the tall trees; and the winter storm, with its mourning hood of mist and bitter hail tears, came rushing down the hills and over the river, as if it had been driven forth to-night from the rejoicing town; and it seemed as if it howled and raged round the mill, trying, in the blind fury of its giant strength, to pluck it up from its foundations, and dash it down to the earth.

Then little Gretchen thought, as she lay in her little bed, of the wehr wolf with the flaming eyes, and of the dark huntsman who rides through the night, to see whom is death; and of the wicked ones with the fair cruel faces and foul trailing serpent bodies, that peer through the tangled branches in the mysterious depths of the forest, to tempt men; and, above all, of the Skeleton Hand that knocks upon the pane before the dead are called. And she thought, "Were I shut up all night by myself in the old church, I should not fear the cold silent ones in their grave clothes, for I should creep close to the feet of the dear Lord, and I should be safe; but, alas! I am now too far away for Him to help me, if they come!" So she hid her eyes with the coverlet, and she heard her heart beating so loudly that it seemed as if the Hand knocked without; and as if in the cold darkness some fearful presence, wrapped in the death mantle, drew near in the chamber to her little bed.

Hearken! Over the forest it came from the distant town. The angry conflict of the night died wailingly off, on great mountain ranges as the holy sound followed hard upon it, and smote it. The strong wind, like a fleet runner, from the watch-tower sped upon its way, bearing good tidings of great joy to all the dwellers in the valleys. Blessings were scattered abroad upon the air, and sprinkled each lintel as they passed, with the sacred influence.

Then Gretchen's tears flowed fast; but they were not for sorrow, nor did she any longer dread the lonely darkness, nor the evil ones, nor the raging of the tempest; for she knew that now the happy birth-hour had come, and she remembered how the patient dumb oxen, sheltered within their stalls from the winter cold, kneel down in humble adoration, and how the birds fly up to the star mansions to be fed by the angels, and learn the songs of the skies; and how to-night the innocent ones, sleeping on mothers' bosoms, or within their cradles, hear voices to which men are deaf; and how

the orphaned ones receive the Christmas love-kiss on their slumbering lids.

Then a great peace and joy filled her heart with their harmonies, and she said, "All creatures are bidden to rejoice to-night. I, too, will keep the Master's feast." So she arose, and crept down the mill-stairs to the kitchen below, where the kindling fuel still smouldered upon the hearth. Then she lighted her lamp. She took forth from the chest of napery a cloth that her grandmother had woven in the days of her own youth. She spread the table, and placed upon it all that she could find in the poor household stores—the loaf of wheaten bread and the pitcher of water; and she laid the trencher and cup in the guest place, and drew the old oaken settles to her supper. Then Gretchen set wide open the house-door, to let the Yule tide in, and she sat down to break bread, and, through her childish tears of loneliness, she saw the light of her lamp, all blurred, fading upon the outward air, and presently rekindle into the light of stars, as it shone around the head of the Child who had come to be her midnight guest.

Oh, the beautiful dawn! Clad in its heaven robes of unspotted snow, with its ice jewels sparkling upon its breast, it came in fair presence down from the mountain top! The great king of the East came from afar with golden gifts to do it homage. The smoke from the home-hearths rose up as from pious censers to greet it; the bells in the distant towers signalled its approach; the voices of the children shouted a welcome into the clear cold air. Even the cocks in the farmyard stood upon tiptoe to make themselves heard. The cattle lowed from the stalls, and the birds, in a fine commotion, flew hither and thither, twittering as if they, too, had been bidden by the Master to his feast.

But Hans, the miller, was in no trim to meet it. Surely he had been drinking of the dark wine of the Evil One, which turns to poison in the veins. His eyes were all red and bloodshot, and sunk abashed from meeting the pure angel of light. His beard was untrimmed, and his clothes were awry, as if those unholy companions had plucked at them with graceless fingers, saying, "Abide with us; are we not brethren?"

Then as he stood in sullen shame, opening softly his door, lest some passing neighbour should see him, a sweet fragrance smote him, that was certainly not alone the heavenly breathing of the young morning. Oh,

wonder! what was this? Had he lost consciousness of the time in the fumes of the debauch, and was it the golden summer that the bells rang out so joyously to meet? But no. The mill-stream wore its holiday garb of ice. The snow harvest rose above the silent fields. The frosty air was keen, and where it breathed left winter jewels. And yet! Hans rubbed his eyes. Where yesterday only the bare brown twigs had interlaced each other around the porch, now clustered the shining green leaves, and the red roses opened their hearts to the day.

Then, as one who comes from darkness into light, he stumbled and groped; and it was as if some strong cruel grasp held him back from his threshold; and he would fain have turned and fled to hide himself in the dim recesses of the forest, for a vague terror fell upon him. Then, as he put forth his hand as one who wards a blow, his little maiden stood at the door, and took hold of him and drew him in, as to a city of refuge from the power of the soul pursuer for ever: and she led him to the table where the Guest Child had broken bread at the midnight hour, and behold! the lowly vessels ranged upon it were transformed into pure gold, and the water within the chalice was now generous wine that might have been trodden out in the vineyards of the sun.

And now the mists of the past, lifted for so brief a space, gather again, and rise a golden vapoury haze, through which, as in some poet's dream, the people walk transfigured in the glow. But always is little Gretchen, as one of the pure shining ones, whom some mysterious sign had set apart from her fellows, just as in old time it lingered on the three who had been up with the Master on the Mount. The miller passes under that marvellous transfiguration into a staid, grave burgher in velvet raiment, befitting his dignities, and with belt well stored with broad pieces for the needy; for he remembers now ever the saying, "The bread that thou givest is sown above for thee in the cornfields of God, and when thou openest thy door to the poor, an angel enters in."

So the benediction fell even upon Hans. It touched the beams and rafters of the old mill, and all prospered beneath its roof, as the place which the Lord of all had blessed:

and presently upon the spot so honoured was raised, by pious hands, that noble pile which travellers come from far distant lands reverently to visit. And as they are led to our Lady's chapel, where stands the shrine of the Child and his Mother, devoutly removed from the old abbey church, they see beneath, carved in the pure white marble, a recumbent figure of a little maiden, with meekly folded hands. And as the light enters through the painted pane, it seems as if saints and martyrs cast down their purple and golden glories to enwrap her in their pomp, and as if the shadow of those outspread hands above, still fell and rested in mystic benediction upon her head. Then, as from distant aisles comes the chanting of priest and chorister, and as the great flood of harmony surges through the space, and as the strong young life of the mighty city of to-day is faintly heard in a blent busy murmur from the walls without, the sacristan tells the traveller in hushed tones the Legend of Gretchen's Guest.

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THE COMMITTEE
and INSTITUTION
Inland. During
the following V

Brig Belle, of St.
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Barque Liebert
Barque Lady W
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Barque Selina,
Ship Calcutta,
Schooner Friend
Schooner Wm. T.
Schooner Blossom
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LONDON, W.
Page 1.

Royal National Life-boat Institution.

INCORPORATED BY ROYAL CHARTER.

SUPPORTED SOLELY BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS.

Patroness—Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen.



APPEAL.

THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT have to state that, during the first eleven months of 1869, the ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-boat INSTITUTION has expended £22,410 on various Life-boat Establishments on the Coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. During the same period the Life-boats of the Institution have also been instrumental in rescuing the crews of the following Wrecked Vessels:—

1869 (to December 8th).

Brig Belle, of Sunderland	9	Brigantine Cherub, of Yarmouth...	4	Brig John and Mary, of Shields.....	9
Barque Fiorenza, of Genoa—Assisted to save vessel and crew	13	Barque Ernest, of Ipswich	4	Brig Ravensworth, of Hartlepool ...	6
Boat of the Brig Elizabeth, of Blyth.	8	Brig Zosteria, of Colchester.....	6	Brigantine Gleaner, of Carnarvon... 3	
Twiler Mart, of Brixham.....	4	Brig Lizzie, of Newport, Monmouth.	8	Schooner Trinity, of Boston	3
Schooner Gaspard, of St. Malo.....	1	Schooner Ariel, of Truro	5	Ship Wm. Frothingham, of New York—Assisted to save vessel and	18
Barque Vera, of Havre—Remained alongside.	7	Brig Henrietta Greer, of Granton—Saved vessel and crew	9	Barque Emilie, of Swinemunde—Assisted to save vessel and crew .	14
Schooner Chafren Winkel, of Aalborg.	7	Steamship Lady Flora, of Hull—Remained alongside.	16	Barque Alma, of Malta—Assisted to save vessel and crew	16
Brigantine Thomas, of Poole, and Padstow shore-boat	14	Barque Drago, of Genoa.....	11	Ketch Meclier, of Cullen	2
Brig Turk, of Rostock	7	Barque Highland Chief, of London.	11	Schooner Astrea, of Königsberg.....	6
Schooner Alexandrine, of Pornic.....	7	Barque Tavistock, of Plymouth—Saved vessel.	16	Sloop Ann Elizabeth, of Barnstaple—Saved vessel and crew	3
Schooner Lord Cole, of Middlesboro'.	14	Schooner Pride of the West, of Penzance—Saved vessel and crew....	6	Brigantine Commodore, of Waterford—Saved vessel and crew	6
Austrian Brig Veritas—Assisted to save vessel and crew	3	Barque Columbia, of Swansea—Assisted to save vessel and crew	14	Schooner Two Sisters, of Aberystwith	3
Brig Queen of the Tyne, of Shields..	8	Schooner Handy, of Wexford	4	Smack David, of Carrigan	3
Brig Libertas, of Genoa	14	Brigantine Isabella, of Aberdeen—Rendered assistance.	8	Brig Supply, of Stornaway.....	7
Barque Lady Wilmorland, of Newcastle—Assisted to save vessel and crew	18	Barque J. C. Horvitz, of Rostock	8	Schooner Bonnie Lass, of Wick—Rendered assistance.	3
Brig Robert Bruce, of Belfast.....	7	Coble Mary, of Hartlepool	4	Sloop Amelia, of Castletown	31
Brig Selina, of Falmouth.....	8	Coble King Fisher, of Hartlepool—Assisted to save vessel and crew ..	5	Steam Whaler Diana, of Hull	3
Ship Calcutta, of London	8	Coble William and Alice, of Hartlepool—Assisted to save vessel....	5	Barque Bertoldo Cerruti, of Genoa 14	
Schooner Friends, of West Hartlepool	4	Schooner William Wallace, of Dundalk—Saved vessel and crew.....	21	Dutch Brigantine Catharina	5
Schooner Wm. Thompson, of Dumfries	4	Smack Isabelle, of Dinan	3	Brigantine Elizabeth, of Drogheda—Assisted to save vessel and crew .	7
Schooner Blossom, of Thurso	8	S. S. Helenia, of Dublin	3	Brigantine Saint Areta, of Santander	6
Scarborough Fishing-boats—Rendered assistance.	7	Schooner, Prudence, of Watchet....	8	Brig Watermillock, of Sunderland... 6	
Brig Beatrice, of Whithy—Assisted to save vessel and crew	8	Brig Philis and Mary, of Blyth—Assisted to save vessel and crew .	8	Three Fishing Cobles, of Scarborough—Assisted to save vessels and...	9
Brig Pearl, of Shoreham.....	7	Schooner, Lady Anne, of West Hartlepool—Assisted to save vessel and crew	5	Barque Hannah, of Drobak, Norway	17
Barque Eliza Caroline, of London—Remained alongside.	20	Ship Electric Spark, of Boston, U.S.	22	Barque Medoc, of Bordeaux	16
Ship Hans's Peterson, of Bergen ..	9	Yacht Eusebia, of Dunmore East—Saved vessel and crew	8	Brig Dawson, of Newcastle	14
Ship Ingre, of Amsterdam	9	Barque Express, of Pt. Edward's Is.	16	Barque Helsingoe, of Elsinore.....	5
Schooner Elizabeth Miller, of Thurso	8	Smack Active, of Selcey—Saved vessel.	8	Sloop Francis Mary, of Inverkeithing	5
Schooner Matilda Calder, of Falmouth.	8	Dutch Schooner Talkina Meiskenia—Assisted to save vessel and...	7	Brig Scheidam, of Middlesborough..	5
Barque Adelaide, of Pernambuco—Rendered assistance.	1	Steamer Viking, of Dundee.....	6	Schooner Brenton, of Fowey	5
Schooner Amelia, of Torquay.....	1	Smack John James, of Chester—Saved vessel and crew	2	Schooner Columbine, of Wexford ...	5
Schooner Daddington, of Dumfries ..	1	Billyboy Swan, of Hull.....	1		
Schooner James Cuckoo, of Ipswich ..	1	Schooner Gipsy King, of Glasgow ..	1		
Brigantine Helena, of Liverpool	4	Schooner Elephant, of Ulverstone ..	1		
Schooner Mary Lloyd, of Carnarvon...	6	Ship Frank Shaw, of North Shields. 14			
Brigantine Rebecca, of Carnarvon...	1				
Schooner Sally Green, of Liverpool—Rendered assistance.	3				
Schooner Francis Ann, of Goole.....	3				

Total Lives saved by Life-boats, in the first eleven months of 1869.. 712

During the same period the Institution has granted rewards for saving Lives by fishing and other boats 360

Total of Lives saved } 1072
in Eleven Months }

GENERAL SUMMARY FOR 1869 (to Dec. 8th).

		£.	s.	d.
Number of Lives rescued by Life-boats, in addition to 28 vessels saved by them ..	712	..	..	..
Number of Lives saved by Shore-boats, &c.	360	..	..	..
Amount of Pecuniary Rewards for Saving Life during the Year ..	14	..	..	2,377 12 2
Honorary Rewards: Silver Medals ..	24	..	..	..
Votes of Thanks on Vellum and Parchment ..	35	..	..	..
Total ..	1072	£2,377	12	2

The number of lives saved either by the Life-boats of the Society, or by special exertions, for which it has granted rewards, since its formation, is 18,921; for which services 90 Gold Medals, 807 Silver Medals, and £31,600 in cash have been given as rewards. The Institution has expended £236,666 on its Life-boat Stations and other means for saving life from shipwreck.

The expense of a Life-boat, its equipment, transporting-carriage, and boat-house, averages £640 in addition to £50 a-year needed to keep it in a state of efficiency.

Donations and Annual Subscriptions are earnestly solicited, and will be thankfully received by the Bankers of the Institution, Messrs. WILKES, GOSNOLD, and Co., 76 Lombard Street; Messrs. COOTTS and Co., 59 Strand; Messrs. HERRIES, FARQUHAR, and Co., 16, St. James's Street, London; or by all other Bankers in the United Kingdom; and by the Secretary, RICHARD LEWIS, Esq., at the Office of the Institution, 14 JOHN STREET, LONDON, W.C.—December, 1869.

ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION.

SUPPORTED SOLELY BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS.

LIST OF THE LIFE-BOAT STATIONS OF THE INSTITUTION.

ENGLAND.		SUSSEX . . . 75		ENGLAND—(continued).	
NORTHUMBERLAND—	1	Berwick-on-Tweed.	Hamshire . . .	Cheshire . . .	New Brighton, No.
		Holy Island, No. 1.	Isle of Wight	150	Do. (Tubular), No.
		" No. 2.		Lancashire . . .	Southport.
		North Sunderland.			Lytham.
	5	Boulmer.	AlDERNEY . . .		Blackpool.
		Alnmouth.	GUERNSEY . . .		Fleetwood.
		Hauxley.	DORSET . . .	IsLE of MAN . . .	155
		Newbiggin.			Piel.
		Blyth, No. 1.			Castletown.
		" No. 2.			Douglas.
DURHAM . . .	10	Cullercoats.		CUMBERLAND . . .	Ramsey.
		Tynemouth—No. 1.		160	Whitehaven.
		" No. 2.	SOUTH DEVON . . .		Maryport.
		Whitburn.			Silloth.
	15	Sunderland.			
		West Hartlepool, No. 1.			
		" No. 2.			
		Seaton Carew.			
		Middlesborough.	CORNWALL . . .		
	20	Redcar.			
YORKSHIRE . .		Saltburn.			
		Runswick.			
		Upgang.			
		Whitby.			
	25	Scarborough.			
		Filey.			
		Bridlington.			
		Hornsea.			
		Withernsea.			
	30	Cleethorpes.			
LINCOLN . . .		Donna Nook.			
		Tredethorpe.			
		Sutton.			
		Skegness.			
	35	Hunstanton.			
		Wells.			
		Blakeney.			
		Sheringham.			
		Cromer.			
	40	Mundesley.			
NORFOLK . . .		Bacton.			
		Hasborough.			
		Falling.			
		Winterdon.			
	45	Caister, No. 1.			
		" No. 2.			
		Yarmouth, No. 1.			
		" No. 2.			
		Gorleston.			
	50	Corton.			
SUFFOLK . . .		Lowestoft—No. 1.			
		" No. 2.			
		Pakefield.			
		Kessingland.			
	55	Southwold, No. 1.			
		" No. 2.			
		Thorpeness.			
		Aldborough.			
		Margate.			
	60	Kingsgate.			
KENT . . .		Broadstairs.			
		Ramsgate.			
		North Deal.			
		Walmer.			
	65	Kingsdown.			
		Dover.			
		Dungeness.			
		Rye.			
		Winchelsea.			
	70	Hastings.			
SUSSEX . . .		Eastbourne.			
		Newhaven.			
		Brighton.			
		Shoreham.			
		Worthing.			
		Selsey.			
		Chichester Harbour.			
		Hayling Island.			
		Bembridge.			
	80	Brightstone Grange.			
HAMPSHIRE . .		Brooke.			
		St. Anne.			
		St. Samson's.			
		Poole.			
	85	Chapman's Pool.			
		Kimeridge.			
		Weymouth.			
		Lyme Regis.			
		Sidmouth.			
	90	Exmouth.			
SOUTH DEVON .		Teignmouth.			
		Brixham.			
		Salcombe.			
		Plymouth.			
		Lece.			
	95	Fowey.			
		Mevagissey.			
		Porthlooe.			
		Falmouth.			
	100	Porthoustock.			
CORNWALL . . .		Cadwith.			
		Lizard.			
		Mullion.			
		Porthleven.			
	105	Penzance.			
		Sennen Cove.			
		St. Ives.			
		Hayle.			
		New Quay.			
	110	Padstow.			
NORTH DEVON .		Port Isaac.			
		Bude Haven.			
		Appledore.			
	115	Braunton.			
		Ilfracombe.			
		Lynmouth.			
		Burnham.			
		Wales.			
		Penarth.			
	120	Porthcawl.			
SOMERSET . . .		Swansea.			
		Llanelli and			
		Pembrey—No. 1.			
		" No. 2.			
		Carmarthen Bay.			
	125	Tenby.			
		Millford.			
		Solva.			
		St. Justinian.			
		Fishguard—No. 1.			
130	" No. 2.				
GLAMORGANSHIRE		Cardigan.			
		Newquay.			
		Aberystwyth.			
		Aberdovey.			
	135	Barmouth.			
		Portmadoc.			
		Abersoch.			
		Porthdinllaen.			
	140	Rhoscolyn.			
		Holyhead.			
CARDIGANSHIRE		Cemlyn.			
		Bull Bay.			
		Moelfre.			
	145	Penmon.			
		Orme's Head.			
		Llandulas.			
		Rhyli (Tubular).			
		Flintshire . . .			
		Wrexham . . .			
		Salisbury . . .			
WILTSHIRE . . .		Devizes . . .			
		Marlborough . . .			
		Chippenham . . .			
		Swindon . . .			
		Reading . . .			
		Wokingham . . .			
		Andover . . .			
		Sturminster Newton . . .			
		Verulam . . .			
		Andover . . .			
DORSET . . .		Sturminster Newton . . .			
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HOW TO BE HAPPY

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.



WHAT a vision of work to be done rises up before the mother of a family, at the first indications of a change in the season! One day after a nursery inspection of frocks and suits, I felt more than usually oppressed with the burden of coming work. The day was one of those lovely precursors of summer we sometimes have in the early spring, when it seems as if winter were quite gone, and warmth and sunshine ready to take its place; but all the pleasurable sensations such a prospect naturally awakens, were overclouded to me by the thought "What can the children wear?" It was no question of finery, but simply of seasonableness.

I am mother of eight children, and belong to that numerous middle class of Englishwomen, whose comfort depends on economy and good management. My family sewing had confessedly outgrown my capabilities long before, and help had become more and more frequently indispensable. I could not add another costly servant to our already large household, and the occasional service of a seamstress had proved expensive, and besides, did not altogether answer my purpose. A sewing machine might lighten my work and at the same time facilitate the domestic education of my daughters. I resolved to try the experiment, and that very evening talked the matter over with my husband.

"We have done without it hitherto," said George, "and I think we can

do without it still; our income is not sufficient for luxuries. Besides, the two eldest girls find useful occupation in assisting you with the needle; whereas if a machine did all the sewing for you, they would perhaps spend their time less to your advantage as well as their own. I think you had better save the expense of the machine and utilize their labour."

I thought George was wrong, but did not say so very confidently at the time, preferring to wait until I had obtained more information on the subject.

He added "A sewing machine is useful enough for one who makes a business of sewing, but there are two reasons why it is of less value in a family; in the first place, it requires an apprenticeship to learn to use it even for straightforward work; and in the second place, the variety of work to be done in a family is so great, that it requires a degree of skill which you, at least, have not the time to acquire."

I lost no time in taking counsel with a friend whose two years' experience might be useful to me. I found, however, that she was in the habit of employing a woman who understood the machine and did not often use it herself, but she would show me a little of its working; it had been to the maker's lately to be set right, and was in perfect order. She broke the needle in starting, however—it was a slender curved needle easily broken—and she could

not get it to work again. This was a double-thread machine, really a very excellent one, but for her own use she had a little chain stitch hand machine; besides, she thought there was an advantage in having two machines, one to use while the other was off to be repaired; the little one was gone now to be looked after on account of missing stitches.

I had not got the encouragement I had expected from my friend's experience, but we arranged to devote the whole of the next day together to an examination of the various kinds of sewing machines in the shops where I thought we might see them to the best advantage. The result of this expedition, was that I returned home in a very confused state of mind on the subject and greatly fatigued.

That night I had a curious dream, induced, I have no doubt, by the events of the day. I found myself in a large room filled with sewing machines of all sorts at work, each in its own way, making altogether a terrific clatter. As my ears became accustomed to the rattling of the machinery, the noise resolved itself into distinct voices from the several machines. One sang:—

"On I go,
Sure and slow,
One thread above,
One thread below;
You can learn me,
Persevere;
All can work me
In a year.
Sure and slow,
On I go,
Made for work,
Not for show."

Another:—

"Hurry and skurry and bustle away,
Plenty of work to be done in a day!
Whirl-a-whirl, whirl-a-whirl, clack-a-clack-click,
On I go always through thin and through thick,
Click-a-click-clack, clack-a-clack-click,
Noisy I may be and not very quick,
But heavy and strong with a thump and a whack,
Whirl-a-whirl, whirl-a-whirl, click, click, clack."

One thus ended its plaintive strain:—

"I shall do no more to-night,
My under thread is twirled up tight,
Locked up tight, useless quite,
I can do no work to-night."

Another mourner with a suppressed jingle:—

"My bobbin has caught, oh dear! oh dear!
I've got out of order again, 'tis clear;
Something has injured the brush below,
Once more to be mended I must go!
If upper thread only could do it alone
My song would be sung in a happier tone."

And a winning whisper caught my ear:—

If one thread will do,
Why bother with two,
To break, to confuse, and to tangle?
There is never a sound,
When my looper goes round,
No shuttles or bobbins to jangle!
I am quick, yet I make
Not a single mistake,
You have only to keep me a going,
And I never will shirk,
The least bit of your work,
But do all of the family sewing.

When I awoke, I remembered that I had heard of a sewing machine working with one thread, which I had not gone to see, because I was told at the other shops that it was only a chain stitch machine. Perhaps this might be, after all, only a stratagem on their part to arouse my prejudice against a rival. I resolved to see it, and went early in the day, accompanied by my friend, as before. I had no intention, however, of making a hasty decision, for I had several questions to be determined before I purchased, and George as well as myself to satisfy.

On entering the shop we found so many others occupying the attention of the attendants that we had some opportunity of seeing what was going on before we were observed. Near the window, a party consisting of three ladies, an elderly gentleman, and a little girl, were sitting around a sewing machine eagerly watching, while one after another worked it for two or three minutes. One of the young women was at hand to lend any needed as-

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sistance; but even the elderly gentleman stitched away, without the slightest difficulty, and the little girl made a hem so perfect, they all declared, that they had never seen another like it.

A little farther on, in another family party, one of those restless boys who never seem content unless in mischief, in spite of maternal protestations, eagerly accepted the invitation of the saleswoman, and whirled the machine with all his little might.

"Oh! Neddie! Neddie!" exclaimed all together in alarm; but Neddie only drove the faster, and when they saw that no harm came of it, they breathed freely again.

Then the shopwoman shewed why the machine was unlikely to go wrong, even with rough usage: it could not turn backward on account of the brake, and there was really no machinery at all likely to get out of order. She showed how both ends of the seam were locked by the machine itself, how strong the sewing was, and yet how it might be unlocked and taken out; then replacing the cotton with a reel of coarse silk, and the needle with a larger one, in half-a-minute was embroidering a piece of velveteen, and explaining how the needle was always set right because there was no way to set it wrong.

My friend touched my elbow and said, *sotto voce*, "It takes me half-an-hour to change needles, and I can hardly ever get my machine to work after breaking one."

In a retired portion of the room were a score or so of women, under the supervision of a forewoman, all diligently working. I afterwards learned this was a part of the Willcox and Gibbs Free Sewing School.

"Are they really sewing, I don't hear them," said I to my friend.

"It is the *Silent Sewing Machine*, ladies; would you like to see something of it?"

We readily accepted the courteous attention, saw the working of the machine in practised hands; tried it ourselves; "How easy!" examined it as well as we could, and having spent a good half-hour most agreeably, and having, so far as we could see, completely mastered the machine, arose to go, expressing our gratification at the pleasure we had certainly enjoyed, and the advantage we hoped to get from our visit. I added,

"I am intending to purchase a sewing machine if I can find a good one within my comprehension and also within my means.

"It is within everybody's means, madam, as it may be paid for, if desirable, by monthly instalments of £1 or more at the ready-money price, and without any disadvantage whatever. As to the quality of the machine, and your ability to work it, you may decide after using it a month."

"And if I shouldn't like it or couldn't use it?"

"You would be quite at liberty to return it and would have nothing to pay."

"What if it were injured?"

With ordinary care there is no danger. The machine is very easy to manage as you have seen, never gets out of order, and will grow in your liking every day. If you do not find it quite satisfactory, you have only to return it, and there's no harm done."

"You are safe in making the trial, at all events," said my friend.

"I am unnecessarily cautious, perhaps, for I have been told that this was only a chain stitch machine, but your terms afford me exactly the opportunity I want; and really if your machine is as good as it seems

to be, the plan of trial before purchase must be as profitable to you as it is inviting to me."

"Our stitch is different from *any other* and belongs to this Company under patent. No one else can manufacture machines, making the Willcox and Gibbs Stitch, except under license from us. On this account the whole sewing machine trade are hostile to us. The double-thread people call us chain stitch to frighten you away from us; and the chain stitch people represent that their stitch is the same as the WILLCOX AND GIBBS, in order to appropriate our reputation. Such competition is not honourable of course, but it is not uncommon."

"After all," I said "the name is of little account."

"A name sometimes carries great weight, madam: the name lock stitch, for example, has had it—thousands of victims, to whom it conveys a sense of security!"

"I suppose I have been one of the victims," said my friend.

"The so-called lock stitch seam has one kind of security—it does not rip *very far* but being inelastic it breaks *often* and rips far enough to compel frequent mending; but the Willcox and Gibbs is abundantly elastic and secure."

When George came home that night, three or four of the children showed by their performances what an easy victory they had gained; and I believe George enjoyed the sewing machine in his way as well as the rest of us. My friend had one on trial at the same time, and her two old ones went in part payment at the end of the month. Her husband afterwards told George that double-thread was double-expense as well as double-trouble—that the cost of the exchange had been paid over and over again by the saving of wages and repairs, to say nothing of the comfort of having a quiet evening with his family.



THE WILLCOX & GIBBS
SILENT SEWING MACHINE (HAND AND TREADLE) Sent for a Month's Trial Free and Carriage Paid to any Station in the Kingdom.

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Machines of other makers taken in exchange at the highest prices for which they can be sold. Illustrated price list free.

Beware of inferior Machines in our shape, and of unscrupulous rivals in trade, who represent that our stitch is identical with the chain stitch.

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